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LLANARTH

F L O R E N C E,

THE BEAUTIFUL.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

“LUCILLE BELMONT;” “ERNEST VANE,” &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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FLORENCE THE BEAUTIFUL.

CHAPTER I.

CHÉNONCEAUX.

“Thy spirit upon my heart doth rest,
Like light on the waters wide,
Which trembles like beauty when caress’d
By the bridegroom, the bride.
O’er rippling streams the sunbeams flee,
Ever inconstant, ever,
But the light my heartsprings drink from thee
Shall be quenched never.

“Rememberest thou the fountain, when
We sat together?
Where cold streams ripple down the glen
Through the purple heather,

Fades the sun behind the hill,
Bright stars are peeping.
If 'tis chill, nearer still
On my heart sleeping.

“Full of sweet thoughts of thee,
I sit by this river's side,
And watch the shadows as they flee
O'er the valley wide,
Mourning for thine own dear sake—
My soul's dark night,
Till o'er my heart thy love shall break,
And bid all be light.”

Henri left these lines lying on the table the evening before the expedition to Chénonceaux ; and when he returned to the hall, the abbé held them in his hand.

“A pretty conceit, M. Henri,” said the abbé, as he put them back.

Henri looked confused and annoyed. There is a mysticism in all the heart's affections, which it cannot bear to have violated.

“They were not intended to be seen,”

said Henri. "All expressions of the feelings appear cold to by-standers."

"You say well," replied the abbé. "You have written strongly because you felt deeply. Now I will ask you, referring to the subject of our conversation the other day, how much must a nation feel, which can pour forth such songs as you tell me you heard in Paris. I agree with you in thinking that music and poetry are the real expounders of all the affections, whether they be personal, or political, or religious; a faith of any description must be sincere, must be great, to inspire true poetry. For this reason, I tell you that this nation is now in earnest; and being in earnest, its movements are to be dreaded."

"I hope," said Henri, "that your prognostications will prove to be exaggerated!"

"You are going," said the abbé, "to visit Chénonceaux to-morrow morning. You will doubtless have an agreeable party," and again a light smile played around his lips. "You will see a glorious pile—one of those master-

pieces of the bright days of François I. Study it well, for it may be, that in a few years or in a few months, its glory may have set. You will, with your poetic fancy, people it with the past; I, on the other hand, should people it with the future, and to me the interest which it would awaken would be melancholy rather than interesting."

"Will you not join us?"

"It is impossible," said the Abbé Louis. "I would I could; but, at any rate, I will not, by talking here, prevent your being punctual to-morrow morning. So good night."

And he left Henri to all the bright anticipations and hopes which he was ever too ready to indulge in.

And so all his doubts and fears had vanished, or how comes it that, after the mistrust of himself on the former day, and when he had allowed a week to elapse almost without one glimpse of Florence, that we find him now writing these verses, planning expeditions, and reckless of

all consequences, indulging in a deep passion? Alas! he was weak, and like most other men, he possessed the failing, common to all, of self-deception. He had abstained for a week from seeing Florence, and had suffered so much, that, after all, he began to think such self-denial was ridiculous; and at last, he actually argued himself into the persuasion that, as Florence was evidently pained at his absence, he owed it to her not to deprive her of his society. What arguments are ever powerful against the appeals of vanity and strong desire?

The morning of the excursion at last arrived.

There was a light tap at Florence's door very early.

"You told me, Florence, if I awoke, to call you," said Marie, "however early it might be. It is a most beautiful day. Will you call Madame Brinville, or shall I?"

"I will, Marie," said Florence, "when

it is time; but it is too soon for her, although not for me, for I think there is nothing so beautiful as the early morning in summer!"

Marie sighed. The day of happiness for Florence would, in all probability, be one of gloom and sorrow for her. Assuredly, to call Florence under such circumstances was an act of self-denial, such as could scarcely have been expected; but Marie was of resolute temper. She had resolved to make this sacrifice—the one idea of self-sacrifice had filled her heart—it had lit upon her soul and now grew with her, like that fabled and beautiful bird superstition has assigned to South America, which alights upon the soil, and there takes root.

Florence rose, and hastily threw a shawl around her. At the window, she enjoyed the fragrance of this delicious morning—while her thoughts wandered from subject to subject, and settled on none. At one moment, all the scenes with which Henri was associated

flitted across her mind; at another, she recalled all her mother had said, and dreaded lest the sad forebodings as to the future should ever be realized; but the thought was discarded so soon as it suggested itself. So peaceful and serene is the light of heaven—so bright the promise it gives, that, gazing upon it in all its glory, it is too hard to realize the grief that may cower beneath it. It would, indeed, have been difficult for so young and graceful a spirit, on looking over this happy vale, to have imagined a day of danger, or realized the possibility of clouds settling on her life.

Florence soon after dressed herself; and when she had called her mother, her anxiety for the moment to arrive when they were to start was apparent. She took off her gloves and put them on a hundred times, looked out of the window from which a view of the old château could be obtained. She had not attained that experience when people learn to conceal their

feelings—at all events, those who have any to conceal.

At length, ten o'clock arrived. The rattle of the carriages might be distinctly heard. Madame Brinville was pale and wan, even paler than she usually was. She was dressed so neatly, that no one looking at her could have mistaken her refinement. Florence, on the contrary, looked brighter and more beautiful than ever. Her shawl was worn in a manner which can only be attained to by those who have studied the art of wearing shawls in Paris. When, by the bye, ladies discard shawls, it is a sad proof of the degeneracy of grace. A very small bonnet was worn in those days, as again in our own; but above all dress, was the happy look called up by anticipated pleasure—the dawn of a joyous, bright, day was revelling in all her pulses.

The carriages drove up to the door. The marquis himself was in a large coach, and Henri driving a vehicle which would,

in these days, be called a phaeton. There was no time for Madame Brinville to arrange any plans for herself, for, on these occasions, the marquis was very peremptory.

“Madame Brinville,” he said, “you will come into the coach with me, Mademoiselle, and La Petite Marie—that will make us complete. M. de Levet will go in the carriage with your daughter and Henri, and take care that the young gentleman does not run away with his beautiful charge.”

“Come,” continued he, “we are late,” as he observed that Madame Brinville hesitated. “I am sure that Henri would never have consented to any other arrangement—would he, my sister?”

The party was placed precisely as the marquis desired ; Mademoiselle de Pompière, Madame Brinville and Marie in the coach, Florence, M. de Levet and Henri together. M. de Levet, in the highest spirits, was singing—

“Je suis ny Roi ny Prince aussi
Je suis le Seigneur de Courcy.”

a distich which he was constantly humming, to Mademoiselle's great annoyance ; in the first place, because the lines were repeated by him in irony of the house of Pompière, and secondly, because she thought the subject of kings and princes much too serious to joke about ; it was therefore with great delight that she saw the carriage drive off at a rapid pace, and heard his voice not melting into the distance, but disturbing it as they drove along.

There were outriders to precede ; the coach with four horses followed the phaeton ; the cheers of the children in the village, delighted with the spectacle, the rattle of the carriage and the cracking of the whips, all gave life and animation to the scene ; the whole party looked joyous and pleased, and none more so than M. de Levet, as he shouted—

“ Amusons nous,
Tremoussons nous,
Peut-être nous nous amuserons pas demain.”

“ Vive la gaieté ! vive la beauté ! vive

Mademoiselle de Pompière!" cried M. de Levet when they were fairly out of hearing. "Oh, how many admirers she had when she was young! She told me before Japhet had sown dissension between us, that on one occasion a young gentleman lost the sight of one of his eyes from spying at her so long at the opera; another, in a fit of indignation at seeing a favoured rival, stuck a sword through his own foot on parade and pinned it to the ground; but she despised them all in turn. Well—hurrah pour la coquetterie! We were great friends, until she heard me say one day, that I was not surprised at her devotion to Japhet, for that he must be one of the family, the likeness was so strong; and then I asked pardon of Japhet for making the comparison. Since then it has been guerre à la mort, but after all she is better than she looks; is it not so, Henri? One day I asked her the difference between Pompier and Pompière, and then I told her that the one put out the heart

of the fire, the other lit the fire in the heart. This made her very bad indeed ; she was so angry that I had to hide the whole morning ; but now, as you see, we go on very well, and are good friends, upon the whole. Besides, Henri, she is your aunt."

"A circumstance which you seem to forget," replied Henri, laughing.

Henri and Florence spoke but little ; only now and then, when some turn in the road introduced them to a prospect more than usually beautiful, Henri pointed it out to her ; and then she looked up with a gaze which proved that her heart was elsewhere ; she was happy, that was sufficient for her ; she did not, as too many do, weaken, if not destroy her happiness, by attempting to analyze it. Molière says with great truth in one of his plays :

"Laissons-nous aller de bonne foi aux choses qui nous prennent par les entrailles, et ne cherchons pas des raisonnemens pour nous empêcher d'avoir du plaisir."

So many persons are not satisfied with feeling happy; they wish to know why they feel so, and the next stage is that they dread and anticipate the moment when such happiness shall cease. Florence was too unsophisticated—some might say too ignorant—to indulge in these kind of metaphysics; it was sufficient for her to feel the warmth of the sun—to believe in the warmth of Heaven's love—to see the world bright and fair for her to call it so.

They passed close to Chaumont, which stands upon a lofty rock above the rapid Loire, conspicuous as the hill, an extinct volcano, from which the name Chaud Mont is derived. At the foot of the rock the village was clustered, as seeking for protection. So abruptly did the rock rise from the river's bank, that there was scarcely room for the road to wind beneath. The stern batteries and the loopholes in the river front proved that at one time galleys of warlike character floated, where they were

now replaced by these graceful boats with white sails flagging idly against the mast.

Feature after feature of the beautiful landscape broke upon his view; the stern old towers of Château Chaumont, strengthened but not modernized; the only signs of modern innovations were the fleurs-de-lis, which ran like a frieze along the top of the building, and bore testimony to the loyalty of the occupants. In the old western tower Catharine de Medicis used to retire to read the stars, and to gain from Heaven the knowledge to light her infernal projects; and here too Mary of Scotland, whose name has ever been the untiring theme of sweet voices and eloquent pens, experienced all that neglect and mortification, the penalty which beauty pays to the ill-favoured; here too she bade farewell to a haughty queen, whose hands were soon dyed, like Jezabel's, in blood. It was to France, as she had learnt to love it at Chaumont, she exclaimed: "Farewell, France, farewell! I shall never

see thee more !” and that sweet and regal countenance, which many a master’s pencil has transmitted to us, was then overshadowed by the clouds of inevitable fate. Here too, at intervals, the beautiful Diane de Poitiers revelled and loved as she had loved and revelled at Chénonceaux, a spot more replete with interesting and historical characteristics, where the history of the past is illustrated by the beauty of the nature which surrounds it.

Onward the carriages rolled towards Chénonceaux ; on each side of the road, the orchards and vineyards expand throughout the vale through which the Cher winds. There are hill and dale, woods, gay fields, glimpses of distant mountains, sunny, rippling, joyous springs, affording altogether glimpses of such landscapes as render Touraine truly the garden of France.

To all these natural beauties let us add a sunny atmosphere, bestowing on the landscape a warmth and a glow we may vainly seek for

elsewhere, save in climes far east, where the vegetation is parched up, and brown grass and sands replace the beauteous verdure of spring ; and here the bright verdure is prolonged far into the summer, and even winter wears happy smiles, such as rarely favour the inhabitants of more northern climes.

Noble, princely Chénonceaux ! These picturesque and feudal towers, mingling with the light and graceful style of La Renaissance, so graceful and yet so irregular, like the loves of her who called thee into being ; light and delicate as when touched by the master-hand of Primaticcio, the airy fabric spans, while its buttresses stem, the waters of the Cher. After the small inn, to which the party drove, is left, a long avenue, bounded by a pleasant stream, leads to a stately terrace, where rare flowers bloom, and at the foot of the terrace on either side the river flows.

From this terrace the château rises, and is supported on a magnificent arch thrown across the river, where another terrace, and a second

flight of steps, lead to pleasure-grounds of great and varied extent. Standing as this old château does, a memorial of the noble designs of men, who, whatever were their faults, illustrated their age by imperishable and unrivalled monuments, it presents to those who stop to contemplate, before they enter it, a pile to which every turret lends an interest, and under whose portals generations of love, beauty, and wit, have passed in succession. But within the walls these associations suggest themselves unbidden, for every object tends to awaken them. By a rare but felicitous exception, the château has undergone little or no change since that time when Diane de Poitiers sat at that oriel window, with greyhound in leash, royal even to the fleurs-de-lis with which her dress was covered in greater profusion than royalty ever adopted. Here were gathered together, and here remain, lasting memorials of those bye-gone ages; we live with François I. and the Duchess d'Etampes;

with Leonardo da Vinci and Benvenuto Cellini, with Henri II., and all the great artists of his own and succeeding generations ; with Agnes Sorel, whose sweet features seem to mourn over the weakness which yielded to love, what ambition spurned ; with the noble and virtuous Sully, great in council as his master was great in war ; here were Calvin and the Cardinal de Lorraine, Catherine de Medicis, with her beautiful maids of honour ; the pathetic Bonsard and the eloquent Montaigne : stand on the terrace before you enter, and recal for one moment the glories and the beauties, the frailties and vanities of Chénonceaux.

Florence was full of childish delight ; the whole scene seemed so gay and happy, the sun shone brightly, and the genial warmth, without which nothing can seem beautiful, soothed the heart, and filled it with repose. Why should she ever have been sad ? she was surrounded by kind friends, who appeared from the first moment to have preferred and

loved her; her mother, with that gentle countenance, was present, and sharing in her pleasures, and did she not attribute some of her sense of enjoyment to the voice which, during the drive, had spoken so gently to her? But poor Marie was very sad, even the lively sallies of M. de Levet failed to make her smile, or when she did so, the smile was so languid, that it belied the feelings of her heart. Madame Brinville was in pain, but like all people who have suffered much in mind or in body, her love of nature was very intense, for the mind seems to become purified through pain, and capable of a higher intellectual appreciation of the beautiful.

M. de Levet was always the same : snatches of old songs, camp anecdotes, not without a certain quaint interest, recollections of the chivalrous past, when generals exchanged bon mots and epigrams with their cannon balls, when Soubise saluted in honour of the investiture of Prince Ferdinand with the garter, bestowed upon him for his victory

over his own army—and then he produced a snuff-box, which had turned a ball in a duel, and which his opponent, having shot him through the arm, presented to him as a proof of his affection and regard. “Ma foi, exclaimed the old man, “on dansait—on dansait alors, toute la vie n’était qu’une danse prolongée, pas l’état tempéré d’aujourd’hui.” So M. de Levet skipped and pirouetted to the sad annoyance of Mademoiselle de Pompière, who stalked up the steps of the château, Japhet on her arm, with all the coldness and serenity of impartial history.

But once within the long gallery of the château, the Comte de Levet forgot his sallies, Madame Brinville her sorrows, Mademoiselle de Pompière her illustrations, Florence her—no, she did not forget the impressions of her heart, for love is like a subtle atmosphere which pervades and blends with every object presented to it. Still, if ever affection speaks in whispers, it is when we are gazing on the ruins and records of the affections of the past,

when we see the memorials of loves and hopes, of which nothing but pale pictures remain of graceful and gallant figures, glowing charms, and stern manhood, of those who lived and died together, sustaining and sustained, but the remembrance of whom is only perpetuated in musty chronicles and faded tapestries. At Chénonceaux, by a noble instinct on the part of its princely possessors, even the trifling ornaments which are associated so deeply with the interest of the past, remain untouched; all the old curiosities, which, when collected, were prized for their antiquity, remain as the collector placed them; there all around, are the golden salamanders of François, with the haughty motto: "Nutrio et extinguo." Each piece of tapestry has its tale, each admirable goblet its interest: a Medicis worked the one, Benvenuto Cellini modelled the other; and there are the fleurs-de-lis curiously wrought, and the D and H intertwined in love-knots, which at each corner tell the tale, more powerful

than any language, of the loves of Henri II. and Diane de Poitiers. Gaze on this long mirror, in the richly-decorated oak frame, placed at the end of the first room you enter, still hung with black, as it was for the death of Louise de Lorraine; think you how many generations have passed before that mirror, how many vanities it has reflected, gentle hopes, and baneful triumphs. Recal those days when Catherine de Medicis stood here, before she had marked the sign of the cross in blood upon her forehead, or Marie de Medicis, shortly before the dagger of François Ravallac deprived her, in her words, "of the best husband in the world," albeit, Sillery declared to the gentlemen of France; "Sirs, be calm, you know the kings of France never die." See passing in long array the proud line of kings, queens, mistresses, courtiers and statesmen, decked in nods and becks, and wreathed smiles, some gaily adorned with flowers as for a high festival, and others with earnest mien, as full of great and good

purpose. The shadows have passed by, but the mirror remains, and never did it reflect a more graceful form than when Florence stood before it.

Each apartment at Chénonceaux possesses an interest so great, that the most careless observer might pass hours ignorant of the lapse of time. Enter the cabinet of Henri II. Here hangs the portrait of the Queen Regent, Marie de Medicis, in that sad violet velvet, such as princes wear in sorrow, embroidered with deep rich flounces of lace, and the high ruff, in which costume she picturesquely mourned the glory and the greatness of France; and not far distant stands her rival, the beautiful Mademoiselle de Montmorenci, sketched lightly as was befitting the part she played in the masque, when she won the heart of Henri as one of the nymphs of Diana.

There is Madame de Longueville, of whom De la Rochefoucauld remarked, she possessed such advantages of person and

mind, that it seemed nature had in her resolved to show the perfection of which it was capable, and the graceful Charlotte de la Trémouille, formed to win the admiration of that age, even as the name is honoured and esteemed in our day. Long is the gallery, and many would be the pages to record the charms of that glorious age—the age of La Duchesse de Chevreuse, of Madame de Montbazon, of Madame de Hautefort, most united together in life, and in the history of the past.

Beyond this room is that of Catherine de Medicis ; there is the oratory she used to kneel in, the cross before which she bowed, the table on which the edict of persecution was penned ; and on the table by the bed is a box with the picture of that son united to her not less by worldly ties than by ties of blood. The darkness and gloom of St. Bartholomew seem to pervade the apartment, the faded but still exquisite tapestry of the bed is fast falling into decay, the star-spangled roof, once

so brilliant in blue and gold, is now dimmed by the damp of many centuries; but even the leather stamped with the fleurs-de-lis still hangs on the wall, while its sombre hue casts a darker shadow over the room.

After a succession of apartments, each possessing some great and peculiar charm, a long gallery is entered, which runs the whole length of the building; it leads directly to another terrace by a flight of steps, and this terrace terminates in beautiful gardens. In this gallery are portraits of nobles and ladies not arranged in anything like chronological order, and who therefore would have been much astonished to have found themselves forced into each other's society.

There is Sully in that antique garb which he so fondly affected, which excited under the Queen Regent the merriment of a vain and frivolous court; but whose manner cannot have failed to check the merriment of the young courtiers, if it possessed half the sternness of the portrait we now contemplate.

Many are there in dresses most quaint and picturesque. Knights of the Saint Esprit, resplendent with the jewels and the collars of the order ; Officiers de la Maison du Roi in all the variety of uniform in which Louis XV. delighted ; others of La Garde Suisse in their peculiar dresses of tawney, blue, crimson and white.

There are the Francs Archers and Lances of the days of Charles VII. Others of the days of Dunois and De la Hire, with their stiff, frigid looks, pompous dresses and forced attitudes. Ah ! and above all, there are sweet and gentle countenances, worthy of knightly ardour, whether at the tourney or in the field.

Florence seated herself in the embrasure of one of the windows ; and her heart was full, in the presence of the mighty names here recorded. She felt how insignificant was her part in life ; and yet in the same moment she reflected that all this beauty, glory, love and romance, genius and wit had passed

away, leaving its history, as it were, to sadden rather than to gladden the heart.

The shades of evening were beginning to fall around the château, and Mademoiselle de Pompière proposed that the carriages should be prepared, when Henri observed a boat at the foot of the terrace. There were two men in it who had been fishing; and he suggested that they should row a short distance on the water and observe the effect of the setting sun on that glorious pile. Madame Brinville was about to remark on the lateness of the hour, when she saw that Florence wished it; so she consented. It was a fine evening—but it threatened a heavy storm—the air was sultry and so still that even the wild aspen leaf ceased to tremble; the cattle collected under the trees; and the trees themselves stood dark and mysterious against the fiery glow of the setting sun; the deep black of the bank of clouds was fringed with a golden light. Madame Brinville, Florence, M. de Levet,

and Henri were in the boat; the marquis, and the remainder of the party, remained in the château. The boat glided on, and no one remarked a low breeze which arose and crisped the water; and that the prospect which had but a short time since looked so bright and sparkling, was now dark and overcast. One of the boatmen pointed to the mass of gathering clouds; but the action passed unnoticed, for all were occupied in silently admiring the beauty of nature united with a glorious master-piece of man's ingenuity. There was a stillness, too, which impressed itself on the hearts of all.

There is something in stillness more impressive than utterance. Grief is never more expressive than when silent; passion never more powerful than when it is concealed; love never more ardent than when murmured in secret; the chief beauty of night is its mystery and silence.

When they rowed on, and looked back, the beautiful outline of the old château seemed

quarried from a bed of light, as it spanned the silver river; over the waters, the bending branches of ancient trees cast their shadows; far to the right, a wide forest extended; while ever and anon, a deep ravine opened, which was lit up by the fall of water, flashing like a ray of hope upon a dark and troubled spirit. On the boat glided, all the party wrapped in their own thoughts, in silent contemplation, when suddenly Madame Brinville felt a drop of rain, which recalled to the party the lateness of the hour and the necessity of returning. In a few moments, as it were, by a mere change of scene, the whole sky was overcast, the glory of the night was obscured, and the château, which, until then, had seemed to represent a bright and fairy palace, now appeared dark as the evil genius of history hanging over a threatening gulf. Soon the rain came down in torrents, and the thunder rolled through the forest in the distance: as invariably happens in that climate,

when it does rain, there is no cessation ; in summer, more especially, the water pours down like an avalanche, and frequently without any or little warning. No cloaks had been provided ; and then for the first time Florence recalled to herself her mother's health, and she trembled as she looked at the ashen hue of her countenance. The boatmen took off their coats, and Madame Brinville was carefully covered up. Fortunately, an old sail was found in the boat, which to some extent sheltered the whole party. It was but a passing storm ; for the dark tempest seemed to rest on the very turrets of the château. The trees bent low before the majesty of the heavens, and there were glimpses of light between the waving branches. Still the rain dashed down, and Henri instinctively pressed to Florence's side as though to protect her from its violence.

“ But now,” she said in a whisper, yet in a whisper which by him was heard above all the violence of the storm, and the abundance

of the rain. "But now it was so beautiful, and in a moment it has changed to a fearful night. How ill my poor mother looks."

Unthinkingly she touched Henri's hand. He seized it, and held it in his own. And now come rain, tempest, and storm. What matter? who heeds it? Not a word was spoken; but at the gentle pressure a glow passed through the frame of Florence. Then, for the first time, truly the mystery of mysteries had been revealed to her. They did not speak one word, but the flash of the oar, the dark and troubled stream, the very shapes of the deepening and receding woods, all seemed revealed to him in an unwonted manner by the concentration of soul on one object; it appeared as if the powers of every sense were developed, and again as if all these senses united to radiate again with deeper intensity. Moments how rare, how transient! glorious, not on account of the mere love for an object, however excellent; but because at that moment there is a reve-

lation of wondrous beauty made to the soul. She whom we love, is the form in which our ideal is represented; and be it said, not lightly, but thoughtfully and reverently, that, whether we kneel by the grave or kneel by the altar, the hearts of all men at these moments instinctively turn heavenward, whereby we learn that Love, in its pure and noble sense, is the primary and eternal principle of Heaven.

The boat sped on rapidly, for the current was strong, and the men were anxious. To these boatmen it was merely a party of pleasure overtaken by a storm; to M. de Levet it suggested recollections of camp and field which he would have assuredly indulged in only there was no one disposed to listen. In Madame Brinville's mind sad thoughts arose. She seemed at every flash of lightning to read the future, and that future was menacing like the coming night. For Florence and Henri this gloomy evening seemed radiant with the dawn of a glorious

day. Hand in hand, in mystic union, there they sat; all nature to them was full of harmony; the movement of the oars, the rippling of the bow, the wind as it swelled through the branches, was all to them an accompaniment to voices of affection.

When they landed, poor Madame Brinville was very pale, and, engrossed as Florence's attention had been, she could not fail to observe this circumstance with great alarm. All interest in the historical past had vanished. When people are wet through, they care little to look at people in frames. They all hurried to the small and very excellent inn which is situated at the end of the avenue. Their clothes were dried, and good fires lighted. Madame Brinville, to the great alarm of the whole party, was seized with tremblings, and an undefined sense of loneliness and terror fell over Florence as the shadow of the future crossed her soul. Surely, was it not sufficient for this young

girl, in one day, to become acquainted with one powerful agency of life—Love? Was she doomed, within the same few hours, to tremble instinctively with the consciousness, that Fate and Death wait at Love's banquet?

The arrangements for the return were changed. Madame Brinville sat by her child, and as she passed her arm round and drew Florence to her heart, it would have appeared to a casual observer as if Florence had been the sufferer; but there was, at the same time, an unwonted brightness in Madame Brinville's expression, which seemed to denote strange and unusual excitement.

CHAPTER II.

THE ABBÉ LOUIS.

To most men, moments have occurred when they were called upon to decide some point on which their destiny depended. If we look back, many of us can recal some particular event, some particular instant of time, on which our fate has turned ; when we sought solitude, to be alone with our own soul before taking a final and irretrievable step, and determining the road by which to traverse the immense and trackless future. Such was the moment when Columbus sat

on those rocks which overlook the pulsations of the vast Atlantic, and pictured that new world far beyond the waves, exclaiming, "Alone I will venture." Such the moment when Frederick the Great, after the defeat of Kolin, a defeat so disastrous that he uttered the words, "This is our Pultowa," sat down in a secluded glen on one of those hollowed trees which, throughout Germany, are used as aqueducts for the mountain rills, placing his head in his hands, and passed one hour in an agony of deliberation, whether to leave the world he could not conquer, or make another effort for the liberation of Prussia. And again, let us instance the great Clive; when the council broke up which decided against fighting that battle which founded an Indian empire, he retired into a dark grove, and remained some hours in deep thought. What the struggle of that noble heart must have been, who can tell; but when he stepped forth, it was with the firm will of a man worthy of the name, great in the battle-field,

but still greater in the responsibility accepted in that hour of seclusion, which associated the name of Clive with Plassey, and immortalized both.

Near the château of La Tour Beauport, a beautiful wild ride of about a mile through a wood led to a curious ravine, or rather, a narrow gorge in the hills; so narrow was it, that the rocks nearly met at the top, and an active man could almost have leaped it; but it widened out below, and through this gorge a stream swept, which in winter, or after heavy rains, was swollen into a torrent, at which season the roar of the waters added greatly to the grandeur of this wild and rocky scene. The banks were clothed with those wild plants which Nature scatters with luxuriance in these sequestered spots, where man cannot cultivate, or, as it is somewhat arrogantly termed, cannot "improve the soil." A steep path led down to the bed of the torrent, where fragments of rock which were lying about added to the desolate ap-

pearance of this solitude. It was a fitting place for meditation. There a man might plan and scheme without dread of interruption ; and so apparently thought the Abbé Louis, who, a few days after the expedition to Chénonceaux, was seated on a rock in the ravine, gazing abstractedly, but intently, in a dark pool of the river. Both above and below this place the river frothed and murmured, while within the circle of the pool all was black and still.

The question the abbé had that day to decide, was that to which he had alluded in his conversation with Henri, whether he would leave those with whom he had been so long associated for a career of greater activity, and, at the same time, of far graver responsibility and possible peril ? As already explained, the superiority of the Convent of La Meilleraye was not limited to the narrow circle of the adjoining demesne ; it was such an opening as he had at one moment ardently desired, for the Abbé Louis was at

heart an ambitious, and in action a most energetic man. He fondly believed, as might have been gleaned from his recent conversation, that he could exercise a control over the passions of the people, when all other means of control would fail. His notion was, that the people might be entrusted with power, if they were only rightly advised, and such was his mistaken confidence, founded on visionary theories.

He felt that wild and stirring times were approaching, and his heart bounded with generous emotion at the idea of the good which he could accomplish by animating and directing them ; he was impressed with the notion that the lustre of all lives only lasts, meteor-like, so long as men are in action ; and that the moments of repose are moments of obscurity ; and yet, as he reflected, when it came to the point, and he had to make his final decision, there was something in the life which he had been leading to which he clung ; there was moreover a dread at the

solemn vows which he was now asked to take—a life to be passed in a solitude the most impressive, and a life in which every action was fraught with difficulty and risk. He had only once been at La Meilleraye, and he remembered that after leaving Châteaubriant the road traversed a wide tract of moorland, which to his ardent mind appeared to separate the beautiful romantic glen in which the convent is situated from the world. He recalled the shadows which crossed his mind, when the seclusion and the loneliness of the spot sank into his soul ; and the vesper-bell, as it was borne on the breeze, sounded like the knell of eternity ; and then his mind turned back to the days of his youth, and he sat there, while error after error, interest on interest, swept before him, rapid as the torrent which was flowing at his feet.

In his earlier days, like the Abbé Rancé, founder of that convent which he was now invited to superintend ; and who, like him,

was called upon to combine vows of strict silence with constant intercourse with the world for religious purposes ; he had passed through many and severe struggles—struggles than which none can be more painful—the struggles of a passion warring against conscience ; he had wrestled, had been frequently vanquished, but had finally conquered ; it was this that gave him that commanding manner. When once a man has overcome the world, he can better, as it were from an eminence, trace and map the various bends of its weird, unfathomable deep ; but no man can obtain this without pain, and anguish, overcome by solitude. Many an hour had he passed with temptations assailing him until he almost despaired. Who shall tell of the travail of man's soul ? How many are there who suffer in silence, and whose hearts bleed from self-inflicted torture !

He who so proudly, indeed so arrogantly, thought that in the coming struggle he was able to guide and conduct to good results the

passions of an unbridled mob, had he sufficiently estimated the work he was about to undertake ; that, in the very district to which he was appointed, a strong feeling had been growing up against the church, and more particularly against that very order he was invited to direct ; and this, not the ebullition of a few misguided men, but that it was headed by those who at one time had been, and recently so, members of that very body. Ambition which, whether in gloom or calm, in excitement or solitude, never wholly slumbers, filled his heart ; and if he now hesitated, it was that the affectionate interest with which he was regarded at Mont d'Or gratified him ; moreover, he loved those with whom he had associated at the château—all the kind attentions, and happy, tranquil moments rose before him. When he thought of this, his mind again reverted from the future to the past. The hours sped by, the wild aspen shook in the breeze of evening ; ever onward the river flowed by in its rapid

monotony ; sometimes it bore with it a few stray leaves, like the thoughts—sometimes a broken bough, like the heart—of him who watched by its brink.

Little did he think that when he at last rose, and, with an animated gesture, said : “I too, as a man, will stand between the living and the dead ; between the living truth and the dead falsehood ;” that the word had gone forth, and that this resolution to be great, and greatly to dare, was the first step towards the fulfilment of his inevitable destiny.

CHAPTER III.

THE TIDE IS EBBING.

“ If thy wan cheek is pale, cast a light joyous veil
Over thy feelings ;
Say not the world is sad, seem to be gay and glad,
Nothing revealing.
If she doth wake the while, smile as they only smile,
To whom light is gladness ;
Let not thy lips declare, broken thy heart-chords are
In thy deep sadness.

“Dying, yes, dying here ; yet, let not the burning tear
Tell her your sorrow ;
Speak of the day as bright, cheerful and gay the night,
Hopeful for morrow.

If she but whisper 'dear, sit by my bed-side near,

I'll turn to sleep ;'

Mark, when her spirit's fled, when all thou lov'st is
dead,

Then thou may'st weep."

FROM the day of the trip to Chénonceaux, a rapid change was apparent in poor Madame Brinville ; the anxiety apparent in her own manner, communicated itself to Florence and Marie. She coughed incessantly, and complained of a pain in her side, which precluded her from any longer accompanying Florence in her walks, and indeed, did not allow of her leaving her room. We are told by the master-poet of every age, that "the uses of adversity are sweet," and in nothing is that sweetness more apparent, than in the kindnesses which suffering and sorrow elicit from those who surround us. If the voice of affliction be low, so also is the voice in which it is addressed ; if the eye be dim with pain and anguish, so is the eye with which that suffering is regarded.

There is far more true sympathy in the world than the satirists choose to admit ; and be it said, to the honour of our common nature, that, as we descend lower in the scale of society, we find these sympathies and these affections still more beautifully developed. No bonds are more binding than those of adversity and poverty. It is among fellow-sufferers that a Barak will say to Deborah, "If thou wilt go with me, I will go ; but if thou wilt not go with me, I will not go." The lively sympathies of the poor for each other, are well known by those who take the trouble to go amongst them, and to study their lives and characters. Prosperity tends to harden the heart ; and it is those who live in perpetual warmth, who, Demophoon-like, shiver when the sun shines upon them, who are least disposed to consider those who are perishing with cold.

No one, during this sad illness, had kinder or more constant friends than Madame Brinville. Florence rarely left her, and Marie

unobtrusively and silently attended to every want. What particularly distressed Madame Brinville was, that she was not allowed to change her residence to that old manor-house, the purchase of which had been completed for a very trifling sacrifice, and she ardently anticipated the time when she would be enabled to live there.

To a casual observer, however, Madame Brinville's state would not have appeared alarming. But during the night, in silence and darkness, no one could listen to the harsh, grating cough, by which her rest was hourly disturbed, without alarm; besides, it was impossible not to observe every day, that she grew paler, and the lines of sorrow and suffering appeared more distinct. Then there was a bright spot of red in the very centre of the cheek, which remained there, as it were, the signal-flag of the danger lurking below. The mental anxiety, from which it was evident she suffered, appeared to add to her physical sufferings. Florence slept in an adjoining

room ; but one night, when she heard her mother coughing, she stole to her door, and looking into her room, she beheld her kneeling by her bedside, with her face buried in her hands. She could not be praying, for praying breathes comfort, and not such paroxysm of grief as that under which she was suffering. The long dark hair hung down her back, and contrasted with the white sheet over which it fell.

Florence stole so silently to her mother's side, and she was so absorbed in her sorrows, that she did not hear her, nor was aware of her presence, until she placed her arm round her neck. There was no movement of surprise, no expression of sudden astonishment, for, from a mother's heart, a child is never absent. Florence then felt that she was in the presence of a great sorrow, which she should respect.

"Florence," at last murmured her mother, when she raised her head, and at the moment the paleness of her cheek was appalling, and

the eye of an unnatural brightness, while the upper lip quivered with an uncontrollable emotion. "Florence," said she, "you will always pray God to keep you good and true, and love me who have been wronged"—She would have added, "by your father," but the words could not be uttered; she could not confess the truth to her daughter.

Florence did not reply, but she knelt in silent prayer, and that golden hair fell like rays of light around her clear, pure brow. She seemed to beam on her mother like the spirit of hope. She pressed her cheek to hers, and the tears of mutual love fell on that parched and feverish cheek. She felt from that moment, that a mother she had so loved, was lost to her, still in this world, yet passing away, like the hours which we cherish while they are perishing. Passing from this world, awful thought! that is, bidding farewell to all that is associated in our hearts with the realities of life, all that has been visible to the senses, and all those

affections which have been developed, we have to trust henceforth to the unknown, that dark and mysterious unknown, and no longer in the actual facts and scenes which have been presented to us. Those who can pass through the last, the supreme agony with calmness, who can address those around in the spirit of Addison, must indeed possess powers which surpass most men's knowledge.

Go while ye may. Gather sweet flowers of pity, and plant them round every tomb ; but leave ye the purest and fairest for those who perish in their youth. For these, let the sculpture call forth from the Carrara marble the delicate lily with the drooping stem, or the scattered leaves of the violet trodden down by some heedless foot. Yes, let us bewail, in all the eloquence of sorrow, the progress of time, the necessities of fate ; but keep the little language of the broken spirit for those who perish, before their hearts are full of dead and crushed leaves, which men call memories, and who seem

only to have been called into existence, to bear away from us the brightest rays of heavenly light.

Truly is it a terrible thing to feel and to know, with the certainty of conviction, that against one whom we have loved and cherished, whom we still love and cherish, the fiat has gone forth, that day by day, the circle of this existence is becoming contracted and less brightened by the joyous colour! This have we seen—this have thousands seen, day by day and hour by hour—the decline of strength mocked by the day dawn, and the darkness of the spirit mingling with the night. And yet, at times, there is a transient glow, and the pulse which was low beats more fully, while the expression of sorrow brightens into gladness.

“She is saved!” those who love exclaim. Ah, no! deceitful Hope has merely shaken her radiant wing over the house of sorrow, and then sped onward. Then the friend is

taken aside, and asked, with a voice whose cadence expresses the heart's desire of the inquirer: "Is she not better to-day? Do you observe how gay she is? She even desired to go abroad, but the doctor would not permit it; and he is right. We should not endeavour to progress too rapidly." Poor mourner! he knows, and his voice betrays it, that he has not confidence in this frail hope.

But day by day even this hope dies away, and those who love almost cease to pray, and the heart becomes rebellious. Is there no relief?—is science exhausted? What a mockery if science cannot save one so beautiful and young! or is there consolation to be found in the oft-repeated thought, "Whom the gods love, die young?" Yes, yes; there is relief—the prayers have not been uttered in vain—there is mercy above. It is a glorious morning—the sun sparkles like diamonds on the sea, not a cloud in the sky. Throw open each window, let us

exhaust the unequalled beauty of this day. Place the poor sufferer near the window—see how the smile breaks over the countenance! The joy of nature has communicated itself to her soul! Bring her fruit, bring her cool water, the enjoyment of the morning is hers! And in a whisper, she murmurs how much better she feels. There is a magnetic influence in confidence—it communicates itself to one and all—and by mid-day, those who most despaired have caught the reaction, and speak of old and cherished plans long since discarded as impracticable.

But wait, there is a knock at the door—it is the doctor. How surprised he will be at the change! Stay—a paleness steals over the cheeks of all—what will he say? But he enters with his usual gentle manner, and his voice is firm, almost gay. How they sit watching his countenance, but it betrays nothing; only when the watch is replaced, and the white transparent hand laid within

the clothes, he looks around, and, if ever face bore semblance of Hope, that is it.

Then he takes his leave ; but to him who follows him out of the room, he will not commit himself to more than : “ Fine weather works wonders. I have seen cases when young persons have rallied in a still worse state. She is assuredly better to-day. But I am very late.” So the kind man hastens away, or the tear gathering in his eye would assuredly have fallen. He has said enough, however, to lighten many a heart, and it is with a gay voice the sufferer hears : “ Well, my darling, the doctor says that you are doing so well, we shall soon have you about with us again.”

The poor child looks around, and would speak words of comfort ; but the lips tremble, the languid voice fails. But she smiles sweetly, while a big tear trickles down her cheek. He cannot bear to see this tear, and leaves the room that his heart may expand in gratitude to Heaven. He walks

erect—the step is firmer, the eye brighter and keener; and what has worked this change? It is Hope.

He will not prolong his walk, however, for the evening breeze is chill, and damp floats around. He will return, and see that every comfort has been attended to, that the windows are carefully closed. He draws near the house, he enters the hall, there are sounds of hurried steps on the stair—there is a mysterious movement, as though some unexpected guest had arrived. Ah, yes; the guest has come—the unexpected guest, the forbidden guest has arrived. He enters the room where all he loves reposes, and Death, the forbidden guest, is seated there.

If this be so terrible when it is the young who pass from us, what is it when the mother has not only to mourn her own fate who is taken away, but the daughter who is left behind? Such was the case of Madame Brinville and Florence. Besides which, Madame Brinville was still so young, that

for herself she commanded every sympathy. On this night it was with great difficulty that Madame Brinville could induce Florence to retire to bed, and when she did so, her mother could distinctly hear her sobs long after she had laid her head on the pillow. The next morning, the cough was so much worse, that Marie sent off immediately for the doctor, and Florence awaited his arrival in an agony of expectation.

On this occasion, he thought it right to desire Florence to leave him alone with her mother; and the interview was a protracted one. When Florence was called into the room, Dr. Briancourt, a kind old man of the old school, took her by the hand, and said:

“My dear young lady, I am sure that you have strength of mind enough to listen to that which it is my duty to tell you in the presence of your mother; don't be alarmed.” For he saw the anguish gathering in Florence's countenance. “With care and atten-

tion, I can undertake to say that your mother may be long preserved to you. Now, now, that is all right," for Florence clasped the hand which had been resting on her shoulder. "I speak too seriously to you, perhaps; but I do so as much on your account as on Madame Brinville's. She tells me that you are in the habit of sitting up at night; and I am quite sure that, by doing so, you are not only doing harm to yourself, but to your mother, whom you love so much. What above all things it is desirable to avoid, is unnecessary excitement. Now, the rule I must lay down, and ask you to conform to, is, that you are not to enter the room after a certain hour. At the same time, some one must be found to sit up with her—the state of her health requires it. Besides, it would be a satisfaction to yourself. I am quite sure that you will agree to all this, when you consider how important all these apparent trifles are in such a case. Now, if you will consent to this little ar-

rangement, I will promise you, on my part, ^{that} that there is no cause for alarm, and so you may be able to save all those tears which dim such very bright eyes."

Florence, who had tremblingly expected a much worse announcement, was overjoyed to learn that, by so slight a sacrifice, she could materially assist her mother's recovery ; so, smiling through her tears, she took the old man's hand and pressed it gratefully in her own. He too was affected, but from a different cause ; he had told the truth, but not the whole truth ; it was quite true that Madame Brinville's life might be saved if she were kept free from all excitement, but it was also true that, with the cunning of his craft, he had immediately perceived there were secret causes of grief and anxiety that no medicine could minister to, and which, unless they could be conquered, must infallibly lead to a fatal result. It was not for him, however, to utter those words to Florence, which would deprive her of the

hope to which she was clinging so fondly, and drag her into the depths of despair ; but before Florence's arrival he had told Madame Brinville the whole truth ; he had carefully informed himself of the whole state of her heart ; he had proved the intensity of her feelings, and had quite satisfied himself, that, unless there was a great and immediate change in her frame of mind, the end would soon be accomplished.

“ And who is there,” he said in a gay voice, while he tapped the lid of his snuff-box with all that preparatory solemnity which seems to enhance to the snuff-taker the value of his pinch of snuff, “ who is there who can take this young lady's place near Madame Brinville ? I do not ask who can replace her efficiently, for that were impossible ; but who can succeed her ? ”

“ Oh ! ” said Florence, after a moment's reflection, “ there is Marie— ”

Madame Brinville checked the exclamation : “ I think,” said she, “ that we shall be asking a great deal too much from Marie ; besides she herself is far from well—she has looked very unhappy for some time past. You remember the day we went to Chénonceaux ? well then I saw her, when she thought we were all in the garden, crying bitterly in the picture-gallery. I asked her if she was unhappy, and she assured me not ; but in such a voice, and with so many tears, that I can scarcely think she was telling me the truth. Marie, I am sure, would do anything we asked, but I fear that this we have no right to desire or even to accept.”

“ I know Mademoiselle Marie very well,” said Dr. Briancourt ; “ a more unselfish girl does not exist ; every one loves her here, and I am confident that if you wished to make her quite happy, it will be by asking her to undertake this duty. If you please,

however, I will send for her, and we shall soon see whether it will be agreeable to her or not. After all, it is merely sleeping in the room, for we must trust that the cough will be soon relieved."

Marie came, and the joy with which she listened to the proposal was so apparent, that it was evident she would have been quite pained, had any one else been sought for. So it was all arranged that Florence was to have Marie's room, and that Marie was to attend to any slight directions which Dr. Briancourt might give her.

On the whole, when Dr. Briancourt left, he had the pleasure of feeling that he had lightened the hearts of some of those he left behind. Florence and Marie were comparatively happy; above all, Marie, who experienced that greatest of all enjoyments, the consciousness of being of service to others. Madame Brinville, meanwhile, felt that strength—so frequently false, delusive

strength—which is the result of excitement ;
but it buoyed her up with the hope that
she might still be spared, not for herself,
but for others.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFLICT OF FAITH.

IT soon became known that the Abbé Louis had been desired to accept the superiority of the convent of La Meilleraye, and great was the interest and the regret which this circumstance awakened. He was one of those men who possess not only the desire, but the faculty of identifying himself with the interests of those whom he was called upon to direct. At a time when the notions of men were generally relaxed, such a man was of infinite importance to whatever cure

or mission he belonged, certainly at the moment we are now writing of, in 1789. That church had been sadly wounded, not by Protestantism and Dissent, but by the negation of all religion whatever; and was it not strange, that, even at such a crisis, sect should be fighting against sect, and creed against creed, when the great enemy of all sects and of all creeds was waging war against them indiscriminately? Whether it be the Catholic or Protestant Church, let us love it as a faith, a faith which in either shape bids innumerable voices swell in praise and love, which raises altars in every land, before which the lowly and the wretched kneel and learn to pray.

Ay, bid at all times, and at all seasons, the church welcome, in whatever guise she presents itself to us; whether it be that church which has endeared itself to the people of Scotland; at what time, in days of darkness and persecution, the old and the young from glen, or from hill-side, gathered

together in some retired valley, and there many an aged man, supported by many a delicate form, with bonnet and plaid cast around him to protect him from the storm, the faithful dog at his feet, and leaning on his staff like a pilgrim of old, raised the voice of supplication and listened to the word of peace ; or whether it be in the beautiful ritual of our own dear mother church, that ritual which we have listened to in boyhood, those prayers which are associated in our hearts with the tombs of the loved and dear, and which in turn will one day link our memories with the living who are left behind us ; that church which mourns with the mourner, and rejoices with the joyous, which places the fount at the threshold of our lives, and welcomes at the altar the love which we have cherished, and the faith which we have plighted, and which again bears us to our last home, and consecrates the tomb at which the mourner kneels in prayer : or whether it be the papacy, with all its pomp and splendour, arrayed in

scarlet and glittering effigies for the grand ceremonial ; its princely hierarchy, its purple and cloth of gold ; its wonder-working miracles ; its long army of martyrs and saints ; its array of priests, who stand by the confessional ; its mystic rights ; its arrogant dogmas ; its infallible decrees. Yes, even whether it be the papacy, with its errors, its short-comings, its superstitions, it is at least a church, and as a church we should bid it welcome.

Never had there been a period in the history of France, when all christianity had been so sapped as during the latter part of the eighteenth century. The philosophers had reasoned, and argued away all sentiments of awe and reverence, and left nothing in the heart but doubt and mistrust ; by slow degrees the leprous poison of their writings had been instilled into the public mind, and polluted the current of men's lives ; the evidence of this disease had been long apparent in the eagerness with which so many deserted

and despised the simple and the true, and laid the foundations of hope in fables and superstitions. Swedenborg, Mesmer, Cagliostro, St. Martin, each had their *clientèle* of followers, when the priests,

“Those gentle priests and true, their fathers loved to hear,”

were neglected; they raised altars to the unknown God, like the Athenians of old, and sought to unveil all those mysteries which have been accounted as sacred. But soon this spirit of inquiry extended farther, and politics were discussed with the same freedom, and in the same spirit, as the doctrines of the church. Here, again, men were seeking after the unknown, an ideal liberty, there was an inarticulate utterance, no man knew exactly what he wanted, yet there was a want. There was a wide difference, a difference which has not been sufficiently insisted on, between the revolution of 1640 in England, and 1789 in France. In the former country,

men fought for practical results, they had no model republic in view. In 1789, men had no practical objects, it was a visionary utopia, for which they combated; no one could strictly define what he desired, but this state of the public mind was of all others the most dangerous, because it was the result of a diseased imagination.

But into a secluded spot like the village of Mont d'Or, these ideas had not penetrated, the gentle slopes of the green hills of La Vendée, or the glens which love to hide themselves in its secluded valleys, were for the time beyond the reach of such republican ideas; the Abbé Louis, however, judged well that this exemption was, after all, only temporary—that these ideas, like a pestilence, having once infected the moral atmosphere, must sooner or later penetrate into its humblest and poorest abodes, leaving behind it the traces of its dreary progress. This, then, is why he hesitated in accepting the post which had been offered him at La Meilleraye. He

was confident in the good feeling of the people, if they were properly led; but it was evident that he had little confidence in their natural disposition; and it was not until that morning on which his farewell sermon was to be preached, that he could make up his mind to the final and irrevocable step.

And that Sunday morning on which he was to bid farewell to all that he held most dear, rose so gladly—it was decked in fairest and brightest colours. The branch in the gentle breeze shook off the dew which hung like silver on the leaves; the stillness of the day of rest pervaded the valley; the light haze gathered round the hill-tops to hail, as it were, the glory of the sun rejoicing in its course. How can we think that Nature does really sympathize with our emotions and affections when the sun rises on all alike. Learned as we are, few are possessed with such superior confidence in themselves, as not in the daily course of life to cling to some agency, some power beyond their own control,

—a power which in the trifling objects of life they dare not speak of as providence, so they call it fate, or luck, as the case may be. We know not on how many victories poets have informed their heroes, that the sun has risen, but we do know that it must at the same time have risen on as many defeats.

The evening previous to this eventful morning, the Abbé Louis had passed at La Belle Etoile. Madame Brinville had invited him to visit her, with the full intention of communicating to him the principal circumstances of her life : but when he did attend her, her affection for Florence conquered every other feeling, and she could not resolve on making a confession which might by any possibility involve the interests of her child ; but she confided quite enough to prove to the abbé that there was a great weight of sorrow on her heart. He saw as well as Dr. Briancourt that there was but little hope for her restoration to health ; and one of the causes which at this moment made him shrink and

hesitate, when on the threshold of the final step, was his regret at leaving one in whom he had taken so sudden but so deep an interest; and he promised that if Madame Brinville sent for him at any time, he would do all in his power to meet her, whenever she might think his presence essential to her.

On this morning, as the hour for mass drew near, from all sides people might be seen approaching that parish church which was dignified by the name of cathedral. It could boast but of little ecclesiastical architecture, except one tower, which had been built in the old Norman style. Sternly and solemnly it reared its head; but wild plants, in very wantonness, being no respecters of antiquity, had clothed and entwined themselves round it, and over it, until the date could scarcely be discovered. Near it was the churchyard, full of obliterated inscriptions and crumbling memorials. Idle expense to sculpture Time with an hour-glass, when the mouldering stone tells a sadder tale. The

party from the castle rarely attended mass at the village church, as the abbé was in the habit of performing mass at the château ; but now, after the whole influence of princely château and humble cottage had been exercised in vain to shake the determination of the abbé, the marquis and his family promised to be present, and to sit once again at the feet of him whom they had so long respected in his office.

The great interest which the whole neighbourhood took in the abbé, gave to the village the appearance of a fête rather than of a day devoted to some religious ceremony. It was so rarely that the marquis ever attended, that a great many people were attracted there to see the *cortège* which he invariably displayed on these occasions, suggested by the not very refined vanity of Mademoiselle de Pompière.

Marie rose early, and whether it was that the constant practice of self-denial gives a sense of inward strength, while it bestows dignity on the manner, or that the habit of doing acts

of kindness refines the features as well as the mind, or that the simple fête-dress was adapted to her, and that her long, braided hair was more becoming because it wanted powder, which was the fashion of the day—from whatever cause, her appearance was peculiarly neat and graceful, when with a simple white handkerchief tied round her head, a white dress and sash, she walked by the side of Madame Brinville, the two crutches by which she supported herself rather adding than detracting from the kindly interest which her appearance called forth.

Madame Brinville, leaning on Florence's arm, seemed to move like the spirit of a dream. Her features had become so delicate that those who had seen her only three weeks since could scarcely have recognized her. There was in her whole countenance a look of mingled hope and resignation; the dark eyes, contrasted with the powder which she wore, seemed to glow with almost unnatural

brilliancy. She wore a black dress and white scarf, which was crossed over her bosom and tied behind, and the long ends hung down nearly from the waist to the ground. But of all the three, Florence, the youngest, had the least elastic step: had the shadows of the future crossed her mind? or did unseen fate point with menacing finger to the eternal and inevitable goal? Was she now convinced that the fiat had gone forth, and that the tomb would claim its part, and more than its part, in the heart of her by whose side she was walking? or was it that, for the last three weeks, she had seen but little of him to whom she had given her own heart? for, if not entirely absorbed in, at any rate overcome by, her affection for her mother, she had endeavoured to control her personal feelings in the presence of a great grief.

Once only since she had left Chénonceaux had she met Henri. It was on an occasion when with her mother she had been visiting that old

manor-house which Madame Brinville had purchased, and where she proposed soon to take up her residence. It was only with great care that she had been able to go so far. On their return from the garden to the road, Henri was standing there ; it might have been by accident, or it might have been that he came, like the bird back to its home, to see the spot where young and tender affections had been cherished.

Madame Brinville was at the moment so absorbed in visions of the past, that she did not observe the effect of this meeting on her daughter ; she did not notice with what a tender manner he pressed her hand, what low words were murmured, and how, when they were uttered, Florence bent her head low to conceal the flush on the brow. But if it was the first time that she had met and spoken to him, it was not the first time that she had seen him. Often, of an evening, she caught a glimpse of that form passing the door, and then again repassing it, and

his countenance bore a worn and anxious look. On one occasion, when she was seated in the garden, she saw him at the entrance of that small chapel which Madame Brinville used so frequently to visit before her severe illness, pale and abstracted. He looked sadder than he was wont to do; but he did not perceive her, neither did he make any apparent effort to do so.

Alas! that it should have been so, but Henri felt the truth, that there were ties and obligations imposed upon him which it would be very difficult to overcome. He was well aware that the marquis, however kind, held as much as any man to his class, and, above all, that he disliked the bourgeoisie. Henri had confided in the abbé, who, with the clear decision of a man who saw what was right in one glance, pointed out to him that he should at once talk the matter over with his father, or give up meeting Florence. Both alternatives were painful, but Henri preferred the latter, sad as it was. He did not dare throw

the whole of his happiness on one die ; he felt that if he told the truth, that, as a man of honour, the door of Hope might be closed against him ; he preferred, as so many would have done under such circumstances, the unknown, although clouds and darkness rested on it, rather than to seek for light which might reveal to him the full extent of his sorrow and disappointment.

Madame Brinville, meanwhile, was impressed with a similar conviction, but she was not aware how deeply Florence was interested in this matter. There are thoughts so sacred to the heart that they are not confided even to the mother. Every one possesses some shrine within him, some secluded spot in the temple to which even the select are rarely allowed entrance. Madame Brinville was deceived as to the real state of the case by Henri's absence during the last three weeks ; but when she looked at Florence, so beautiful and full of grace, she indulged in hopes and dreams which had far

more of a visionary character than she would have been disposed to admit, and she thought with all a mother's fondness that the marquis himself might desire such a marriage for his son ; so she had gone on in doubt and uncertainty, at one moment tempted to advise Florence to destroy any latent feeling at her heart, at another speaking of Henri as of one whom she highly esteemed, until Florence would leave the room to revel in the feelings of happiness which such remarks conjured up.

But it was at such times that Madame Brinville felt the full weight of the mistake she had made ; she then remembered that the humble descent, the lowly origin might have been overcome, if the blood had been but pure. But there arose the question, would the marquis ever discover the truth ? Oh ! evil of all error, that above all it is suicidal, and its consequences can so frequently be only averted by new error. To move with such a weight on her heart, to

feel that she had innocently injured one so dear to her beyond the possibility of redress, to know that the object of her affection was the monument of a father's guilt, and that even the last blessing of broken hearts—confession of the truth to one who has been wronged—was denied to her. This it was that had led to that restraint between mother and daughter, which had been felt rather than expressed by Florence; she felt that there was some mystery impending over her—a mystery which, amid all the sweet mutual confidences between mother and daughter, she did not venture to ask her mother to dispel; and from the manner in which, on more than one occasion, when she mentioned her father, her mother had avoided the subject, she felt that in some way this mystery was associated with him.

The small church was crowded when Madame Brinville arrived, and the mass had commenced. The Abbé Louis was so gene-

rally beloved by his congregation, that on this occasion the villagers had themselves lavished some money on the decorations of the altar. A blaze of light illuminated a piece of sculpture not unworthy of the altar which it was intended to adorn. The church was plain, of that rude Norman period, which is not without its beauty ; it conveyed a notion of earnestness and stability as if men had built, keeping ever in view the eternal nature of the faith which they were to preach and testify to.

All the walls were decorated with the representations of incidents in the life of Martha. There were small chapels in the side aisles, dedicated to various saints ; and on the walls of these were suspended different votive tablets, pictures and offerings in commemoration of mercies gratefully received—superstitions if we will, but simple and beautiful ones, which it is not unmeet to cherish. Some of these, it is true, were calculated to excite a smile from the quaintness

of the painting. One man, for instance, thrown out of a gig, was represented lying bleeding in the middle of the road. The gig was floating in mid-air, and a whole bevy of little angels with vermilion colouring were busily employed in staunching the wounds. In another, a long row of little children, each smaller than the other, in long night-dresses, recorded the fact that a family had been saved from fever. The whole of the walls were covered with such memorials, interspersed with faded garlands and knots of ribbons, so that it seemed either that the inhabitants of Mont d'Or were more than commonly grateful, or that an unusual number of blessings had been showered on this small community.

Madame Brinville passed up the centre aisle to her seat, which was directly in front of the pulpit. The marquis and the whole party from the château had already arrived; and as their places were in the same line with the pulpit, when Florence looked up, her

eyes met Henri's. As the organ swelled, and she knelt in prayer, while her face was buried in her hands, ever present was that countenance to her. It seemed to be happiness to her to pray the same prayer, to breathe the same thanksgiving, and to know that another heart rose responsive to the solemn strain.

How many separate hopes; wishes, and interests were there beneath that roof! Here were hearts silent and lonely, like the chapels in those obscure aisles; here were pure robed living children, the noble Sisters of Mercy; here were ambitions; here dreams never to be realized, here the pure and innocent, like Florence; here the wanderer, like Madame Brinville. Yes, as she knelt when the voice of prayer echoed through the vaulted roof, when the aisles prolonged the notes of the swelling organ, and the dim religious light mingling with the prismatic colours of the painted windows, filled the whole church, her soul was

subdued to religion. Presently the psalm arose—

“Gentle mother, seest thou where
The wanderer kneeleth?
O'er her heart the fervent prayer
Of mercy stealeth,
What the grief, what the despair,
The tear revealeth.”

And then Madame Brinville almost sobbed aloud.

When the mass was ended, the Abbé Louis entered the pulpit, and then there was a breathless silence; himself pale, but calm, with firm and compressed lip, he looked like one who had resolved to conquer all his feelings. He remained long in silent prayer; and all that time Florence kept her eyes on the ground. A sense of the importance of the occasion appeared to pervade the whole congregation; and those who on other occasions felt so little, could now rise to the height of the circumstance.

He urged, in glowing language, the dangers which menaced France at that moment, the universal darkness which was overspreading the minds of men. The bands of all authority had been strained, many broken.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, “que faire d’un peuple maître de lui-même, s’il n’est pas soumis à Dieu!”

“And yet,” he said, after one of those periods when, as he paused, the stillness could be almost felt, “there is, I will admit, another body which has been wanting to its high mission, I mean the church. Had we of the eighteenth toiled in the spirit of the church of the seventeenth century, what might not have been accomplished! How noble were the foundations of that time, the Sorbonne, the Oratoire testify. Never did missionaries carry their labours farther beyond the limits of the then known world; and the first words of civilization which fell on men’s ears were the doctrines of our faith. Then were the Benedictines of St.

Maur founded, the Port Royal reformed, and the Carmelites devoted themselves to good works ; but above all, and blessed before all, ye holy women, the Sœurs de Charité, daughters not of Ignatius Loyola, but of St. Vincent de Paul. Then was your great and noble scheme of benevolence developed. Holy and beautiful was the thought to blend your mission with the toil and travail of the world. Ah, if there be any here whose hearts are oppressed with a load of anguish, bring hither all your afflictions to the service of this church. If you cannot be beloved, you can still love, and lay day by day upon the altar those hearts which you have won by the soothing influence of your own."

His form rose, the lip was compressed, the eye was fixed, and Madame Brinville trembled as she looked at him, when her eye met his.

Then he glanced rapidly at the whole state of the country—the necessity of men linking themselves together by no political

bonds, but by the universal bonds of faith and creed. He spoke of that good king, who should have been cherished by his subjects, he enumerated all his many acts of public good, his private virtues.

“These,” he exclaimed, “are his merits ; let those who are banded together against him speak of his defects ! Yes, I see stone after stone of the ancient foundations of France torn away. I listen to their fall into the unfathomable deep. There is no hope, save in the light of Love, which is reflected even in the bosom of those dark and troubled waters. At such a time, my friends, I am called upon to part from you, to leave this happy seclusion, to take my share in this great warfare, to bear my own burthen ; the voice that calls me shall not call in vain. The obedience I have sworn I shall now testify to in another sphere—the word shall be spoken elsewhere. Here you have heard it from my lips for the last time.”

As the abbé paused, and knelt in prayer,

there was an audible sob. This alone broke the silence, which lasted many minutes. Presently, the congregation prepared to leave, and there arose the sound of many footsteps, the murmur of much repressed feeling. All turned towards the pulpit, and there stood the abbé, pale and still as a statue. As the crowd collected in the aisle, Florence found herself standing by Henri's side.

“Florence,” whispered a low voice, “will you remember this day, this hour even as I shall for your sake? for you represent to me a faith.”

And she bent her head; and amid the sound of the departing multitude, the “Yes!” which she murmured was scarcely audible.

CHAPTER V

THE FIANCÉE.

AT this moment it was Madame Brinville's great anxiety to reach her home without being interrupted. A chord had been struck in her heart, and she desired to meditate on all she had heard in solitude. But do what we will, plan as we will, however great the thoughts within us, however in heart we may be separated from the world, while in the world, we cannot avoid its trifling obligations and duties, and hourly requirements; we may decline to elbow and scuffle on the

road to preferment, but we cannot avoid being jostled in the street while in meditative mood; and even the most recluse are not free from the necessities of social life.

When Madame Brinville left the church, she found the marquis waiting; Henri having returned with Mademoiselle de Pompière, who, for important reasons, thought that she should not be seen at this moment. At first Madame Brinville intended to avoid this interview, but a woman's instinct showed her that, if the marquis wished, as he apparently did, to address her, it would not be possible to pass him by; and also, that her doing so might have a very strange appearance, and convey a false impression; so she immediately conquered her emotion, and waited for the marquis to approach her.

There is in all minds such a respect for true feeling, that wherever this is manifest, the most unthinking will adapt themselves to it. In this instance, when the marquis looked into Madame Brinville's countenance, he saw

that she had been deeply affected, and checked the observation which he was on the point of making about the merits of the discourse.

“Mademoiselle Florence,” said the kind old gentleman, “it is very wrong of you; you have quite deserted the château. But I fear also that this has arisen from attendance on your mother. It is a great pleasure to me to see Madame Brinville again.”

They turned and walked together down the village. Then the marquis observed how sadly Madame Brinville had changed within only a few weeks. He spoke of Chénonceaux, and Florence’s heart beat; but he made no allusion to Henri, he only expressed his regret at the unfortunate termination of that expedition, but he did not venture to propose another.

“And Mademoiselle de Pompière is well?” asked Madame Brinville. “I saw her in church.”

“Oh! and she would not wait to speak to

you," said the marquis, laughing. "That is too bad; she ought to have told you herself of the happy event which is about to take place in the family."

"Some good fortune befallen Japhet?" said Madame Brinville, with a smile.

"Why, to be sure," replied the marquis; "there has been a lucky incident connected with Japhet, as well as with my sister, but of a very different description of event. Poor Japhet flew one night against the bars of the grate, and was so terribly burned, that he died in a few hours. But I do not think that this would, to do my sister justice, have kept her from you so long; there is something still more important and interesting, which has led even to Japhet being forgotten immediately."

"What can that be?" said Madame Brinville.

"Guess. Well, I will tell you: she is engaged to be married."

"Engaged to be married!" Madame

Brinville and Florence both uttered an exclamation of surprise, and then could not prevent themselves joining in the marquis' hearty laugh.

"Yes, and who to, do you imagine?" he continued, in the same tone of mystification. "Who do you think, Madame Brinville, or you, Mademoiselle? young ladies are generally very *clairvoyant* in these matters."

Both the ladies declared their inability to guess.

"Now for another exclamation of wonder," said the marquis; "to the Comte de Levet."

He was not mistaken in the effect produced. The announcement was received in the same tone of astonishment and doubt as the first was.

"Ah! yes, is it not wonderful?" said the marquis. "We are told that marriages are made in Heaven, but this I think has more material causes. I knew how surprised you would be. As for De Levet, he has not ventured to appear; and you see how rapidly

my sister drove away the moment she saw you."

"But, if I may make the remark," said Madame Brinville, "I thought that they were not on the most friendly terms?"

"Ay, very true," said the marquis; "but then it does happen that sometimes, as you will find in chemistry, the substances most repugnant to each other combine, and that the result, as we must hope it will be in this case, is very satisfactory. But the case is, that since the day when we went to Chénonceaux, poor Levet has met with a sad misfortune. It so happened that he had placed whatever money he possessed in the hands of the same man who holds my sister's fortune in trust; this person became bankrupt, and when the accounts were made up, it appeared that there was only sufficient to pay off half the money he owed. But the question that arose was, on whom the loss was to fall? This led to a great deal of discussion; and the noble old soldier declared that he

never would be the cause of Mademoiselle being deprived of one penny. This determination I imagine to have arisen less from regard for her, than from a chivalrous sense of delicacy and honour. He then told me that it was his intention to accept some inferior situation abroad. I in vain endeavoured to dissuade him from such a step, but all my arguments were ineffectual; for, although he did not object to residing permanently at the château, while he possessed some fortune, however small, he was very tenacious of his independence, when it became an arrangement conducive to his own interests. It occurred to me one morning, that the best thing my old friend could do, was to marry my sister. I lost no time in pointing out to him what a sad event it would be to me to lose my best friend. I had to fight the battle strenuously but at last he yielded. As for my sister, she was so touched by his conduct in these money transactions, that, Japhet the bird of discord being out of the way, she at once consented;

when I say at once, of course you understand, Madame Brinville, that there were all those emotions and nervous attacks which ladies are prone to under such circumstances. But little could any one have imagined three weeks since, that Mademoiselle de Pompière would become Madame la Comtesse de Levet."

"And the wedding is to be—"

"As soon as the arrangements can be made; but you ladies know well that my sister is not a person to be married except in the most orthodox manner; the consequence is, that the preparations will take a little time, during which I fear that very little will be seen of Monsieur or Madame la Comtesse."

"I shall regret that," said Madame Brinville, and she spoke the truth, for Mademoiselle de Pompière, however absurd in her conduct, possessed a kind heart; and in life these separations, even from indifferent people, have a sad effect.

After all that is said and written, the whole of life is a contradiction, an anomaly—weep though we may, there is so much to laugh at—smile though we may, there is so much to weep for. The real philosopher was Democritus, whose countenance at the same moment represented smiles and tears; it is rare that any feeling is sufficiently strong to determine an existence, or to draw into one channel all the thousand currents which flow through any one life.

This marriage was very surprising, and for the moment Madame Brinville felt it was so; but in the presence of so solemn an event as that which she contemplated happening to herself, it could only convey to her mind a very slight degree of interest; and in answer to the marquis's invitations, all she could do was to point to her worn appearance, and to urge the greatest of all claims in life, that of the necessity of seclusion.

CHAPTER VI.

REGRETS.

THE note of preparation soon sounded at the castle ; Mademoiselle de Pompière was resolved that she would be married in a manner worthy of her illustrious descent. M. de Levet was again set to work on triumphal arches, the whole neighbourhood was put into requisition for orange trees, and sufficient blossom was collected to marry off the whole district ; the poor count sighed and moaned, but struggled on ; his great anxiety was to evade any demonstrations of Made-

moiselle's affections, for, like all ladies of a certain, or rather uncertain age, her love was as sudden, unaccountable and demonstrative as her hatred.

But this excitement at the château led, notwithstanding the state of Madame Brinville's health, to much greater intercourse between the château and Mont d'Or; in the first place, the slight attentions which Mademoiselle used to pay to the old marquis were entirely at an end, and Marie was constantly sent for to read the papers of these stirring times. Florence was, however, devoted to her mother, and never accompanied Marie on these occasions, although excuses were not wanting for her so doing, if she had desired to have availed herself of them.

To Marie there was a strange fascination in these visits; for Florence, on her return, never failed to ask her every possible question, always, however, carefully avoiding to name Henri. Yet the tell-tale voice—that which never deceives, even though the

countenance may—asked the question for her ; and Marie, after having sometimes tantalized her by speaking of everybody but the one person in whom she too well knew she took an interest, would then say how he had accompanied her down the long avenue on her return home, how much anxiety he had expressed for Madame Brinville, and how (first proof of affection) he too had avoided that name which he would otherwise have so naturally mentioned ; and in repeating all this, there was a strange interest for Marie. If she could not be beloved for herself, she felt a pleasure in identifying herself with the affections of others and then she fondly believed that she had quite conquered her feelings. Vain idea ! that in the kindest hearts where passion has once existed, jealousy is not found lurking ! rare instance is it in which it is possible to look with unblanched cheek on a rival's happiness.

But there was a trial in store for Marie

which she had not contemplated. One morning as she was leaving the château, she found Henri, who she had been told had gone out hunting, standing at the gateway. She was in haste to return home; but as he sauntered by her side, evidently with the desire of making her some communication, she slackened her pace, and there was one of those pauses which invariably occur when one person has some communication to make of an important nature, and it is doubtful whether it will be agreeable to the listener. At last Marie, to break the silence, asked him the simple question, whether he had not intended to have gone out hunting.

“Why, yes,” he said, “but you know I changed my mind. I wanted to speak to you, Marie. I knew that you would be at the château to-day, for I heard the marquis send a message to the Mont d’Or: there has been some important news from Paris. Well, the fact is, that Paris news, or indeed

any other news, has ceased to interest me very much."

Marie's cheek grew pale, and she rested her hand on the balustrade of the terrace, for she felt that she required more support than the poor crutch could afford. All this was remarked by Henri, but he was so selfishly occupied with the topic next his heart, that he failed to notice Marie's state. For some time past he had argued himself into the persuasion that, whatever feelings toward him Marie might at one time have possessed, she had successfully combated them. It was a convenient opinion, and as such, readily welcomed; and also, to do him justice, he was not vain enough to think that he could excite in her heart an interest so deep as that which she really possessed, without his showing any corresponding sympathy.

"I dare say that you cannot guess what the subject is, on which I want to speak to you and to take your advice, Marie." And he turned, so as to look her full in the

face, and even he could not avoid being struck with the expression of pain which her countenance wore. He seemed to recollect himself, and stopped immediately. "No, no," said he, "on second thoughts, I won't tell you."

"Yes, yes, do, Monsieur Henri," said she, making a violent effort to command herself, "I wish so much to hear you. I take so great an interest in all that concerns you. I feel as if I were your sister, Henri; so, pray tell me," and a pale smile broke over that wan countenance; it was like a wintry gleam of sunshine.

"Very well," he continued, with a silly laugh and manner, which men so often assume whenever they touch upon the topic of their affections, in a word, when they are about to own to feelings which are the glory and the honour of man. "Come," said he, "I am sure you cannot guess what it is, Marie."

"Tell me."

“Have you ever discovered that I am in love, Marie?”

Again her cheek grew paler than ever, but she turned her head away, for she feared that if he observed it, his narration would stop, and there was that in it which strangely interested her.

“Marie,” he continued, “I tell you, because you have always been a kind friend to Florence, since her residence at the Belle Etoile, and therefore, I am sure that I could not consult any one who would take a deeper interest in my feelings. I cannot express to you, Marie, how deeply I love Florence; it may seem strange to you, but I did so the first moment I met her; you remember that afternoon when you were both sitting in the garden? I thought that I never saw a more beautiful picture than she was in that arbour. Marie, I think that she loves me, but I have had reasons for not throwing myself in her way lately. Latterly, I understand that she has suffered a great deal in consequence of Madame

Brinville's illness ; if there were no other cause, I would not trespass upon her at such a time, but I suffer so much from this loneliness, that I can no longer conceal my feelings. You do not know what it is, Marie, to feel the solitude of the heart, such as I have experienced it the last three weeks."

"Perhaps I can understand it," replied poor Marie.

"I love you for sympathizing with me, Marie."

For a moment Marie forgot herself ; she trembled violently.

"Love me !" she exclaimed. "Love me ! No, not me !"

Henri was so absorbed with his one idea, that he continued in the same strain, not heeding the interruption :

"Now that I have confided in you, Marie, I shall have some one to sympathize with me: if you could only imagine what a comfort this will be to me, how long the days have

lately appeared. I have lost all pleasure in sports which I liked above all others, hunting and shooting ; besides, it is not that alone, but I fear that there cannot be any settled happiness at all. Are you aware, Marie, that there is very bad news from Paris ? The princes, instead of remaining with the king, have all emigrated : the Comte d'Artois has gone to Turin. There will soon, I fear, be bloodshed."

"I hope not, Monsieur Henri," said poor Marie, quite alarmed at his lamentations and his melancholy forebodings.

"Yes, but that is not all : the Bastille has fallen ; the good king has been dragged from Versailles to Paris with every description of outrage. He was taken to the Hôtel de Ville, and there presented to the people as the Roi de la Bourgeoisie. Yes," said Henri, his voice faltering with emotion, "the descendant of St. Louis placed the tricolor cockade in his hat, while Bailly the mayor said : 'When Henri IV. entered Paris, Sire,

he had reconquered his people, now the people have reconquered their king.' But depend upon it, Marie, it will not end here. I am confident that in a short time not one of these old châteaux will be safe ; you may be well assured, that the days of what we call the aristocracy are numbered. I never thought that the mob would proceed to such extremities."

"You are not afraid for La Tour Beauport?" said Marie, "the Marquis is so beloved."

"I am not at all afraid of the people in the immediate neighbourhood ; but it is impossible to say what the mob from Tours might do. Only the other day I thought that the people of Paris were devoted to the person of the king, and here we see to what excesses they can be driven on. Now I know that at Tours and Blois—at Blois especially—there exist clubs as violent as any in Paris ; and if these were once roused, they would make little scruple of marching on here. How often have I

pointed out to my father that the days of feudal privileges are at an end—that it is far better now quietly to yield what in many instances are, after all, only mere forms. We nobles are like the Moors, who, we are told, still keep the keys of the towns which they so many centuries since possessed in Spain. Feudal rights are mere badges of servitude; they confer no real strength on those who possess them.”

“I dare say that you are right,” said Marie; “for I have often heard you say so.”

“Yes, and here again is what I mean,” said Henri. “My father, good, kind as you know him, and all people know him to be, yet on this point of his family feels very deeply. I do not say that he would not yield to my wishes even here, but it would pain him to do so; and I have never dared yet to tell him how much I love Florence.”

“And what do you mean to do, Monsieur Henri?”

“Well, I scarcely know what to do. It is

all very well while I am now speaking to you, Marie—for I like you very much, and you can talk to me about her; but one reason why I have stayed away from La Belle Etoile is that I anticipate objections on the part of the marquis, and I will not mention the subject yet; for if he did desire me not to see Florence again, it would make me utterly miserable.”

“Then what do you wish me to do?” she asked, “for I must go.”

“I wish you,” he replied, “to recal me to her memory, sometimes—to allow me, at any rate, if you think this is unwise, to speak to you about her—to tell me daily how she is. If you knew the happiness it is, Marie, to speak of one we love, even if the fulfilment of that love is impossible!—No, no, you are not going yet—stay a few minutes longer. Sit on this root of a tree; it is the spot which poor Abbé Louis liked so much. And now tell me about Madame Brinville; is there any hope for her?”

“Indeed, I think very little,” sobbed

Marie ; for her feelings had been so overwrought, that at last they found their natural flow in tears. “ But, Monsieur Henri, did it ever occur to you to see any one dying little by little, day by day, life becoming dimmer ? for after, all, however sad life may be, there is something in existence very charming—very beautiful ; so as I look at Madame Brinville fading away, my heart seems to sink within itself.”

“ And is Florence very unhappy ?” asked Henri.

“ Very unhappy.”

“ Poor girl !” said Henri. “ If she suffers, you may assure her that I do so for her. Tell her anything from me—tell her that I love her.”

“ You said just now, that you intended to conceal your affection, on account of the marquis,” remarked Marie. “ Is this not inconsistent ?”

“ True,” said Henri ; but he might have asked, “ What is more inconsistent than

love?" "Then I will leave you now," said Henri, "for I see that you desire to go. Promise me only one thing, that you will in all things promote my wishes for love of her."

"For love of her! why not for love of him?" thought Marie. She thought of the marquis, of her duty, of her truth. Would it be a kind thing to encourage Florence in feelings which, after all, might only prove her misery? But just when she had arrived at this conclusion, she thought of her own heart, and mistrusted the doubt which suggested itself to her. Might there not be something of personal jealousy lurking in her own mind? was she confident in the purity of the motives, which led her to decline to assist an affection in which she took so deep a part? So, from fear, not of being misconstrued, but doubtful of her own strength, she made the promise to Henri, the propriety of which she so greatly questioned.

With many kind words they parted ; she, with those poor crutches, slowly passing down the avenue ; Henri, with firm step and clearer brow, returned to the château. When he arrived there, he found the whole establishment thrown into the greatest consternation. It appeared that the Comte d'Artois, on his road to Turin, had passed through the village of Mont d'Or, and left a letter for M. de Levet, who had formerly been on his staff. In this, which was full of high and dignified compliments to his gallantry and conduct, he was invited, in common with many other gentlemen, to proceed to Sardinia, where, under himself, the Prince de Condé, the Duc de Bourbon, it was proposed to form a nucleus of a noble guard, to march into France and protect the sovereign, if his person should ever be in danger.

The Comte de Levet was delighted. A man who, as he said, had served under Marshals De Noailles, Soubise, and Broglie, hailed the bustle of a camp with much pleasure. “ After

all," said he, "marriage will keep. *Oui, on revient toujours à ses premiers amours.* I shall be back again, marquis. Meanwhile, *voilà la vie de garçon.*" In fact, M. de Levet was in extacies, and scarcely regretted the circumstances which had led to this emigration of the princes. All the preparations for the marriage were stopped; the triumphal arches were deserted for his valise; his clothes were collected hurriedly together, the uniform of twenty years date dragged from its hiding-place, and the old soldier went singing all over the castle snatches of camp-songs, which he had learnt during many a long bivouac.

However, when he approached Mademoiselle, the natural courtesy of the old French gentleman appeared, and he thought it necessary to assume an expression of sorrow, which produced a most comical effect. It consisted in spasmodic movements of all his muscles. He would pretend to drop on one knee and take her hand, while he sang the

refrain, "Tout viendra dans le temps." Meanwhile, Mademoiselle's hopes were wonderfully buoyed up, and if everything did not go on as merrily as the marriage bell, great apparent resignation was displayed. The comte put on his uniform, drew his sword, practised the carte and tierce at the wall, and might be seen performing sundry salutes and evolutions before an old Venetian glass in the hall, which certainly never reflected a more original figure.

But this equanimity on the part of Mademoiselle, so unaccountable indeed, must have been the result of great self-command, for, in the first instance, she was quite inconsolable. Enough sal-volatile could not be purchased in Mont d'Or. She fainted away, and could only be recalled to her senses by M. de Levet's assurances of fidelity and endearing expressions; but, as it appears, she gradually became not only resigned to the disappointment, but absolutely her spirits returned in their most exuberant shape, so

much so, that even the count became piqued, and could not restrain some of those piquant observations about indifference and levity, which men generally indulge in in their moments of annoyance.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EMIGRANTS.

ALL the preparations were completed for M. de Levet's departure, but it was not possible to start without a passport. This led to a delay of some days. The authorities had to be written to in Paris; and as a reply was not immediately received, the count began to be seriously alarmed, lest it had been discovered that it was his intention to join the royal family at Turin, when not only would his journey have been stopped, but he would have been personally subjected

to great annoyance, and probably ordered up to Paris.

Three times a day did he go to the post-office, and always returned to the château with the most melancholy expression of countenance, which Mademoiselle remarked with more than her usual bitterness. But one morning, when even the marquis began to fear that some evil consequences might ensue from the police having been made cognizant of this projected journey, Mademoiselle de Pompière entered the breakfast-room with a smile of conscious triumph, which she in vain endeavoured to suppress. She was in such high spirits, that even the marquis, who was not very keen in these matters, noticed it.

“Why, my sister,” he exclaimed, “our poor Levet, in despair, has been to the post-office again, and is told that the passport will arrive to-morrow! Ah, poor fellow, poor fellow! And you, whom I expected to see overcome with grief, enter the room with

as lively an air as if you were going to a wedding, instead of preparing for a parting."

"Well, brother, here I am," she said, making no reply to the marquis's observation. And she threw herself into a chair with the greatest apparent satisfaction.

M. de Levet approached her with the most admirable courtesy. He took her hand, which was hanging over the back of the chair, and pressed, or pretended to press it to his lips.

"Ma pauvre chère amie," said he, "c'est bientôt adieu."

And the hypocrite pretended to lower his voice from excess of feeling.

"Yes," he continued, after a pause, looking round with a kind of chuckle which made the marquis smile, "if we had only known there would have been this delay, we might have arranged it otherwise. You should have accompanied me to the court of the Comte d'Artois. There the charms of the

last of the Pompières would have been fully appreciated."

"Accompanied you, count! And why not now? Thank you—thank you for the kind and affectionate idea."

"No, no!" exclaimed poor De Levet, alarmed at the manner in which his suggestion was received; "you are not prepared. There is no passport. No one, in these days, can move without a passport *en règle*."

A cloud passed over Mademoiselle's countenance.

"Well," said she, after a pause, and again the gleam of triumph dispersed the gloom. "Here, M. de Levet, is something that regards you. I regret not having given it you before; but it escaped my memory."

And she put a paper into his hand.

"Why, it is the passport after all!" said the count, with a voice of surprise mingled with pleasure. "Mais comment donc, comment

done, how did you get it? and what could have led to this unaccountable delay?"

"The fact is," said Mademoiselle, "it had arrived some days since. I got it myself from the post-office, and sent it back to be altered."

"It arrived some days since, and you sent it back to be altered! What can all this mean?"

And the poor count looked thoroughly mystified.

He opened the passport slowly, as if revolving the whole transaction in his mind, and read:

“ ‘ Nous, &c.,

“ ‘ Prions et requérons toutes les autorités civiles et militaires, quelque'elles puissent être, de laisser passer M. le Comte de Levet, et Madame la Comtesse de Levet, née de Pompière.’

“Madame la Comtesse de Levet!” exclaimed the count, quite pale. “There must be some mistake! What does it mean?”

And then came a series of violent ejaculations more calculated to relieve his own mind than that of the lady sitting near him.

“I will tell you, count,” said Mademoiselle, rising in a majestic manner. “Why, my dear De Levet, I knew that I was fulfilling your wishes in the step which I took. Fortunately, I am acquainted with one of the chefs des bureaux of the police, so I wrote to him to have the passport arranged; and you see that it has succeeded admirably. Why, you did not think that I was so selfish as to have consented to remain here while you were in danger. The blood of the Pompières is not so pale as that. I did not say anything, for I well know all the difficulties which your generous heart would suggest at this proof of my devotion to

you; but from the first moment I had arranged my plan, and as you see how well a woman can keep a secret. How my heart beat, when you yourself but now suggested that, if all the arrangements had been made, I could have accompanied you. Well, here we are united to part no more. Yes, my dear count, we will go to Switzerland, where your noble and chivalrous character shall display itself far from this noisy and troublesome kingdom. We will be lulled to sleep by the sound of avalanches and cataracts."

"Avalanches and cataracts! Bon Dieu! what does she mean? I am not going to Switzerland!" said the count, sternly.

"We are not going, you mean, dear count? No, now I remember it is Sardinia. Well, then we shall be lulled to repose by the blue waters of the Mediterranean."

"Always lulled to repose!" muttered the count.

"But," said the marquis, who had been

hitherto chuckling to himself, "the passport, my dear sister, is for Madame la Comtesse de Levet. Now, whatever you may be some day, and I hope at an early day, you are not at this moment, allow me to say, Madame la Comtesse de Levet ; and so you might be liable to great inconvenience on your journey, even if it did not offend your rigid notions of propriety."

"Of course," said M. de Levet, "a very pertinent remark."

"My brother," replied the resolute lady, "true affection never slumbers. I have all the documents which are essential for the marriage. I determined that the surprize I would give my dear count should be complete. But I will tell you more ; that Monsieur Vignolles, the gentleman through whom I made all the arrangements, has also written to me to say that the emigration has excited so much indignation at Paris that troops are to be sent to the frontier, to form a cordon ;

so unless we start at once it is very doubtful whether we shall be able to pass it."

This was a thunderclap to poor De Levet. He had no other passport. There was no time for delay. He had faithfully promised the Comte d'Artois to attend him whenever his services were required. He would not on any account be absent from the gallant corps of the gentlemen of France at such a moment. Like a skilful general, he saw at once the whole difficulties of his position, and determined to conceal his annoyance, and to turn it to the best advantage he could. If he remained, of course the marriage was to go on; if he went, he saw no way of avoiding her; and then he reflected that, after all, he secured a competency, happen what might, and in these days of doubt and confusion this was a great point. Moreover, it gave him the opportunity of joining what would probably be a luxurious corps of the

best blood in France with becoming lustre. The connection with the marquis was most agreeable to him, and if he quarrelled with the lady at such a moment, it was clear that this intercourse must terminate; so he decided, as so many do frequently even in marriage, to make a virtue of necessity, and to go through the operation with what gallantry he could.

On referring to Monsieur Vignolles' letter, it was found that Mademoiselle had stated what was quite accurate, when she said that it was absolutely necessary to start with the least possible delay. The only thing to be done, therefore, was to send for some curé to attend that evening and perform the ceremony. Shorn, indeed, it was of all that splendour which Mademoiselle had fondly anticipated, but, like many other people, she was compelled, in this emergency, to make the best compromise she could. So it

was. All the arrangements were made, and that evening M. le Comte de Levet was united to Mademoiselle de Pompière.

We will drop a curtain over the tears and blushes of the bride, how she sank under the ordeal, how M. de Levet appeared in uniform, which had the desired effect of diverting his attention, and how the next morning he was up very early, the travelling-carriage was at the door, and the happy couple on the road to the frontier.

CHAPTER VIII.

AMBOISE.

WHILE these scenes were enacting at the château, another departure was preparing in the village of Mont d'Or. It was evening, and Madame Brinville's chair had been wheeled to the window, so that she was enabled to see mapped out before her the picture of the beautiful valley. There had been a heavy storm, the dark masses of clouds shrouded the turrets of the château, and the topmost branches of the lofty trees bent before the majesty of the heavens. At

this moment the whole valley was spanned by a rainbow, so bright that the very gaze was dazzled, and, as the storm swept onward, the rainbow appeared to contract narrower and narrower, like the hopes of life, which contract as it advances.

Florence sat at her mother's feet, and placed the book which she was reading on her knees. Marie, at the other window, in deep thought, was recalling the words which Henri had said to her, commenting on passages in the book from which Florence was reading, especially when they happened to sympathize with her own feelings.

"Florence," said Madame Brinville, "you do not look at that rainbow, and yet it is very beautiful."

"Yes, mamma, but it passes so quickly. No sooner does one admire it than it has vanished. Don't you remember how we laughed at the man, a few days since, who was singing in the street, 'Who will

buy my sunshine?' and in the middle of the song the rain came down in torrents? Sunshine and rainbows, they are so uncertain, that even this rainbow, mamma, may be followed by a storm."

Madame Brinville did not reply, for at the moment, as she was looking out of the window, she observed the postman. Day after day the mission of that pallid, indifferent man had been the one object on which all her heart was centred; and it happened, that on this occasion, at the moment Florence was occupied in discussing the merits of the rainbow, Madame Blanchard entered the room with a letter in her hand.

It was so rare an event for Madame Brinville to receive any letters, that Florence was silent. Her mother looked at the address, and then requested that she and Marie would leave her alone, and she did all this with so calm and self-collected a manner, that it appeared perfectly natural for them to do so.

There was evidently some secret ; but, thought Florence, was it strange that her mother should have a secret, when she herself possessed one ?

So soon as Florence and Marie had left, Madame Brinville examined the letter more carefully, and turned very pale ; it was in the handwriting of the man to whom she had given all her youth, all her affections ; and her heart softened even towards him as she perused its contents. It was from the man to whom all her warmer affections had been devoted—for whom she had sacrificed her home, and the parents who render home most dear ; and in this letter Madame Brinville was upbraided for not having gone to Paris some weeks since. It assumed that she had received the former letter, and her power of starting at any moment ; and it said, with undeniable truth, that the times and circumstances admitted of no delay ; that it was absolutely essential for her own peace of

mind, and for her daughter's happiness, that she should return to Paris. And, moreover, the letter was full of expressions of affection, which even she who had been most deceived could not fail to confide in.

Madame Brinville rose with all the consciousness of an inward force.

"Florence," she said, "you will be surprised at what I tell you, that we shall start for Paris immediately."

"For Paris, and immediately !" and Florence repeated the words almost mechanically.

It seemed as if she had only just become settled at the Belle Etoile, and now she was to leave it in search of some new home ; and then there flashed across her all that she had felt and still felt for Henri. She recalled every incident of the expedition to Chénonceaux. Her life was so identified with the scene on which she was gazing, that when

she heard her mother with a voice not excited, but calm from depth of feeling, talk of leaving the Touraine, she thought that the change was almost impossible.

Madame Brinville had risen, and the woman who had appeared so feeble was powerful to command ; her attitude admitted of no reply. Ah ! yes, the secret of power in life is earnestness, it was so in the present instance. Under ordinary circumstances, it would have been impossible to have moved under many days ; now every arrangement was completed in so many hours, and Madame Brinville was quite prepared to start the next morning.

The change to Florence was so sudden, that she was unable to realize it. We soon become identified with places ; and Florence, even if no such predilection had existed, might very naturally have become attached to Mont d'Or. But now she was called upon, without any assignable reason, to

enter, as it were, on a new and varied existence. It was not within her power wholly to command her feelings; and when she recalled those happy moments, and contrasted the past with the future, the contrast was too sad, and she burst into tears.

At any other time Florence's tears would have been imperative, but most painful was it to Madame Brinville to reflect that she could not explain to her daughter the cause of this sudden decision; but she felt that sorrows had been gradually accumulating around her, like those sands which the simoons of the East drive before them, parched and arid, as her wasted heart. Florence also felt that her destiny depended on this journey, but she was sensible at the same time that it was idle, and would be wrong in her to endeavour, even if she could do so, to prevent her mother acting in accordance with her sense of what was right; and it was therefore in the spirit of a sad but calm

resolution, that she commenced making all the necessary preparations for their departure.

Every effort was made by the kind Madame Blanchard and by Marie to induce Madame Brinville to change her decision, or at any rate to postpone her departure. In the first place, they insisted on the precarious state of her health, and then on the unsettled condition of the country, which rendered it unsafe to travel; the disorganization of society had commenced, and those who had everything to lose, and those who had everything to gain, were alike prowling throughout the provinces; all argument, however, was vain. But Madame Brinville was very anxious that Marie should accompany them, as she dreaded the possibility of any accident happening to herself, and Florence being left alone, so that it was arranged that Marie was to accompany them as far as Blois, where a brother of Madame Blanchard resided, who would see her safely back to Mont d'Or.

The remainder of that day Florence, for the first time in her life, had to act a part to spare her mother's feelings. She had been informed of the marriage at the château that evening, by the curé of the next village, who was sent for to perform the ceremony ; and she was therefore certain that there would be little prospect of seeing Henri again ; and on reflection, she felt that it was as well she should not do so. Fortunately, she was so busily occupied in the preparations for her journey that she had little opportunity for bitter thought or vain regrets. It was not until the evening, when the sun was setting, and her mother was lying down, overcome by exhaustion, that Florence had really time to recal the past. Up to that hour her regrets had been vague, it was like an atmosphere of sadness around her. So the castaway, at the first moment, is not able to realize the loneliness of his position, to calculate the little strength which he possesses within himself,

the distance from the land of his hopes, the troubled waters which surround him ; but when Florence passed through the garden and sat at the porch of that chapel, where, more than twenty years since, her mother had sat (a generation of sorrow having elapsed) ; when she thought over the events of the last few months, the tranquillity of her life, the associations which had grown up day by day, some most dear to her ; then the image of one never to be forgotten rose before her, idle words of little meaning flashed across her mind, thought succeeded thought, like the ripples and broken rills of the water flowing from the fountain, at once monotonous, and yet ever changing.

“What is this sad mystery of life?” says the poor child. “Where is my father? who is this strange man, who directs my mother’s movements? Mystery of mysteries !

I start into life," she exclaimed, "and immediately my heart is full of trembling and fears of death, like a spring flower growing among tombs. I see one whose features fill my heart at once, and the first lesson of affection which I learn, is the bitterness of separation ; and then there is a strange weight over my spirit, as if some evil menaced every one I love, and the hope which the future might otherwise inspire, vanishes away. Yet, how do I know that sorrow and grief is not the natural state in which God has placed us on earth ? Who told me that I was to be happy ? May there not be a something higher than happiness ?"

Then she repeated to herself the lines :

“ Flowers grow upon each grave,
Basks in beauty ocean's wave,
Where the dead are sleeping.
Smiles upon the lips are playing,
And the cheek wears no betraying,
While the heart is weeping.

“In the mournful forest, where
Spare-leaved branches beat the air,
While the dead leaves
Fall and fade upon the ground,
With darkness and decay around,
The lone heart grieves.”

“And yet the night is so still and beautiful, and the twilight, which is creeping on, lulls all things to repose. The deep shadows of bough and branch bend over the stream, and seem to touch the shadows as they break the silvery ripples. How noble are the turrets of the old château, how dark their outline against the golden background of the setting sun, how brilliant is the tribute of beauty which the sky pays to the coming night; the wind is quite stilled, and the trees stand forth as ever-watchful guardians of the approaching darkness, where all seems so happy. Why am I alone unhappy? Yes, in this little heart, unseen by all, sorrow dwells. What matters it then to me, if the whole world

is full of enjoyment, if only my own heart is sad? If the icy finger of the north is laid on me, what matters it to me if the whole world beside is sparkling in the sunshine of the east?"

So she thought on, until at last the heart itself grew tired and weary of sound, and she ceased to reflect, she only felt. She then passed into the chapel, and knelt before that altar, by the light of the one pale lamp, which was never extinguished.

The next morning, very early, and before any intelligence of this sudden determination was conveyed to the château, the travellers started, but not without much excitement in the village. It was very touching to see these primitive people crowding round the carriage that was to bear them away; each brought some little trifling remembrance, and amongst so many, none was more grateful to Florence than a small flower-pot full of earth from the garden of the old

homestead, with a flower which had grown there, which was brought by old Joseph. He had unconsciously acted in the spirit and poetry of the earliest colonists, who always took with them some portion of the soil of the old country ; of the Crusaders, who filled the Campo Santo at Pisa with the soil of Palestine.

Then there were bouquets of flowers ; and one little child offered a sketch of the château, in which it was rudely but accurately represented. The love of truth peeps forth always in the first initiative efforts of childhood, when they believe that perfect drawing depends on perfect accuracy of detail. It was with great difficulty that they could tear themselves away ; and up to the last moment Florence hoped, while she dreaded, that Henri might make his appearance ; but Marie, with great judgment, had taken care that no information should reach him of this sudden departure until

after they had started. She felt that the result could only have been painful to both parties ; and as the event was inevitable, the only thing that remained was to avoid as much misery as possible.

The first place of any importance which the travellers arrived at was Amboise, and there, for the first time, they perceived indications of the state of things in Paris. The caricatures in the shop-windows represented the king with every circumstance of ridicule and ignominy, styling him “Le cochon d’engrais,” and the queen as the “Autrichienne.” The diligences rumbling down the road had the royal arms half-effaced ; and the fleurs-de-lis were converted into the heads of pikes, to propitiate the popular favour.

Madame Brinville, on her arrival at Amboise found herself so unwell, that she had to stop the night there ; the only inn in the place was situated at the foot of the castle.

They drove into a large court, round which a wooden gallery run, which served as a means of communication for the different apartments. The house, from its rickety appearance, seemed as if it must have dated from some centuries since. But if the house did not within present any great appearance of comfort to tempt a traveller, the view in some measure compensated for the deficiency. A wide quay extended the whole side of the river, which flowed in no languid torrent at its base. A magnificent bridge spanned it, touching an island situated in the centre of the stream ; and at the back of the hotel, on a lofty and precipitous rock, stood the castle, a noble monument of past histories and the scene of future ones.

So completely are most of us identified with the present—so curiously is the world within comprised in those faculties, and

experiences which we possess, that, strange to say, belief in the past is of all things the most difficult. Whether past or future, we cannot imagine that there is any certainty separate from our own present identity. There is scarcely any one who, if he were to die, and had the power of revisiting the world in any number of years, but would feel some surprise to observe that it wagged on much as usual; and so it is with history, it requires an effort of the mind to people the spots we are visiting with the characters who we are told existed three or four centuries since. We cannot realize to ourselves that in that town, whence we are admiring the prospect, the sentence of those unhappy men who were connected with the conspirators D'Amboise was passed; that Gabrielle d'Estrées used eve after eve to saunter on that terrace on which we are idling. How many noble and courtly dames, how many

gay and brilliant courtiers, have rioted here ! All this it is hard to picture, even with history in our hand.

Here at Amboise the progress from the feudal times may be traced through the architecture, the massive walls constructed at a date when strength only was considered, mingling with graceful outline of the Renaissance, the whole combining in one glorious monument of strength and beauty. All the terraces were again of a later date ; and we endeavour to recal that goodly and motley array of ladies and cavaliers, who from time to time have thronged them. There they move in those garbs which indicated the state of mind of that day, as certainly as the scallop-shell and the staff did the pilgrim to the shrine of Nôtre Dame, the burnished armour, the coat of mail expressed the iron resolution of those cavaliers, who, like Bayard, were *sans peur et sans reproche* ; and did not the patches, the silken ribbons,

the powder, the rich flounces of the ladies and the laced coats and hats, luxuriant wigs, ruffles, silken ties, and festooned knees of the courtiers—did these not typify the degeneracy, the careless recklessness, the sparkling frivolity of those days, when action was fast merging into sentiment, but when still some of the old blood flowed in the veins of those courtiers? The age of chivalry had not quite passed, while men wore swords.

At Amboise, Madame Brinville was compelled to remain no less than three days, her health was so shattered; but unfortunately, her anxiety to proceed rapidly almost destroyed the benefit which she might have otherwise derived from repose. Activity and exertion are invariably the best antidotes to grief; and Florence never felt more utterly wretched than during these three days, when she had no demand on her exertion, and had full time to reflect on all the past. And yet, at any other moment, her heart would

have been gladdened with the beauty of the scene—the noble bridge which spanned the river like those great minds which leave highways of great thoughts behind them, over which generations may pass in their life's pilgrimage.

At the bend of the river, white sails might be seen taking advantage of the breeze in the reach; the houses on the banks and along the quays, with their quaint, lofty, picturesque gables, were reflected in the stream, wherever the extreme rapidity of the current smoothed rather than ruffled the surface. The haze of summer, that charm which the warm day wears as a veil to her beauty, hung over the whole scene. Frowning above the town, was the old castle, this ancient relic of bygone days, but with a long future of history still unrecorded on its walls; and at the end of the terrace, overlooking the ill-built, curious town, was the chapel dedicated to St. Hubert,

very beautiful indeed, although opposed to all pure architectural notions.

The whole of the walls and the roof of this chapel were decorated with admirable sculpture, representing trees, branches, foliage, and shrubs wild as the tangled thicket in which they grow. But those who looked closely into this strange fantastic confusion of emblems could discover that, whichever portion they examined, the emblems formed a cross. Neither was the representation of the legend of St. Hubert with the cross growing between the horns of the stag omitted. Around and outside the chapel were seats to which, at all times, people frequent, in order to enjoy the unrivalled panorama ; while, in the blue distance, the forest—the pride and glory of the Touraine—extended on all sides, where the dark and sombre firs mingled with the golden hues of the oak and beech. Sitting and meditating there at evening, the only regret is that we cannot delay this rapid

progress of time. Oh, blessed privilege if it were so !—if, but for one moment of our existence, there were a pause in the flow of the inevitable stream—if the sun would but stand still for one brief hour, that we might feel and identify ourselves with the actual present.

In the cathedral of Strasburg stands a clock of most curious workmanship : at every quarter of an hour, some puppet with an emblem of death appears—Time with his scythe, or Fate herself with the hour-glass ; but when mid-day strikes, all those figures which are emblematic of mortality, pass in front of the dial-plate : a child is seen in its mother's arms, there is a bridal party at the altar, and a new-made grave. Meanwhile, the day of the month, the month of the year, the movement of the planets, all are represented : a clock, indeed, of most wondrous workmanship, but most remarkable of all, that it is only wound up once in half a century, so

that he who gazes at it, must feel that it will still be ringing its dismal hours, when the glory of his manhood is passing away. Nothing more awful than to look on this clock, and mark the minute hand, as its movement can be traced in one unceasing round ; no pause, no delay, the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, that dismal clock striking the hours.

This evil—the lapse of time—is the only one which increases upon us, even while we are lamenting it, the only one in which the cause of regret augments with the expression of the regrets themselves ; to all other sorrows, time works its cure : wounded affections may be healed, even the vacancy which death has made may be filled up again, if not adequately to the heart's desire, at least sufficiently so to deaden the keen edge of affliction ; but for him who lamenteth the past, his regret shall grow with his years and strengthen with his weakness.

Florence sat on the terrace, and conjured up visions of that young love, that one emotion, which possesses the faculty of perpetual youth, contained alike in the heart of the young child, of the golden maiden, or patriarchal age. Strange mystery of the affections, which love to dwell on things which grieve them, is it not true that there is something in the saddest parting which renders it not unfrequently the moment which we recal most frequently? But her parting had been a lonely one, she had not even the satisfaction of listening to those last words which, with the first words, form affection's electric chain. All she could do was to recal every incident of the past, and those lines which from time to time he repeated to her, and then to indulge in hope—hope, which, like the fabled bird, will spring forth from the ashes of the past.

To her great joy, Madame Brinville, after

two days, made a manifest improvement, so much so, that on the third morning, they were able to leave Amboise with every hope of reaching Paris on the second evening.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PALAIS ROYAL.

IF, in these days, one place more than any other concentrated within itself all the passions, pleasures, illustrations, and magnificence of Paris, it was the palace of the Duc d'Orleans. Paris was France, and the Palais Royal was Paris. Enter it whenever you might, there was the same unvarying round of glittering dissipation, of ardent folly, and brilliant ephemeral existence. Under those beautiful galleries, which the avarice of the prince had constructed, all that wealth could purchase,

or fashion could desire, was displayed in the windows, with that refinement and taste which constitutes every shop in Paris a temple of art. Proudly designed by the priest statesman, the Cardinal de Richelieu, the Palais Royal remains a monument of an age, when ambition was ennobled by the great works which it called forth. Little, however, did the Cardinal foresee that the ground which he enclosed would become the focus of sedition, and the palace itself the temple of treason. Little, indeed, could it have been foreseen, even in the days of the Regent d'Orleans; for then, these admirable gardens, with the wide walks, were thronged with bright and goodly companies, gentle and gay, none were welcome, but such as loved sunshine, and to sport, insect-like, on the stream of life. If there is nothing more beautiful than these gardens, even in this century, what must they have been during the glory and splendour of the last?

It is night, yet all parts of the gardens are illuminated, as if it were day, except here and there, where some who haunt the spot prefer gloom and darkness. The crowd is so great, that it is scarcely possible to move. And what a crowd ! Has all beauty deserted Cyprus to revel here ? Light the laugh—light the jest—light the manner ! The Aspasia or the Laïs of the time moves through the throng ; no queen has humbler homage rendered to her in her progress. One, the type of France herself, so gorgeous in apparel, so glorious in her beauty, so noble in her attributes, so frail and evil in her heart. Rustling silks sweep the *allées* and galleries ; hand seeks hand, and passion passion. The pageant of life—of real life—of practical existence, unrolls itself like illuminated scrolls — splendid but decaying. Yet all are not so gay and brilliant. There is a book-stall, round which a crowd has

gathered. It is Volney's shop ; and pamphlet after pamphlet pours from the press. Here we find the last number of "Le Bon Sens," "Avis aux Parisiens," "Le Roi s'Amuse," "Les Secrets de Versailles," "L'Ami et l'Amie," and what not. Each is taken up in turn, criticised a moment, and then thrown down again upon the counter. But this evening, a new work has made its appearance, with a frontispiece. It is styled "L'Humanité," and is written by M. le Médecin Guillotin. Why does it excite so much attention? What is the curious picture in the commencement? Some machine of novel construction—some machine of which a man is pointing out the merits amidst much laughter—a machine to render death speedy and easy. It would seem that the entrance into life is so full of sorrow, that we all should be able to leave it with the greatest possible comfort.

One young man with long locks of light hair, with a wild and spirit-stirring look, touched his slender neck.

“C’est bon,” said he, “pour les hommes entêtés.” And the sally was met with a general laugh. It was Camille Desmoulins, and he was speaking of the guillotine.

But in the centre of the garden in July, 1789, the scene was still more animated. Perched upon forms or stools, every man who could express himself with ordinary power was haranguing a small or large assemblage, as the case might be. But there was one spot the centre of all attraction. It was a kind of amphitheatre, constructed the previous year by the Duke of Orleans. The whole of this place was surrounded by rich trellis-work, and this again covered with choicest flowers. Fountains played around it, and it seemed a fairy abode only to be visited by gentle thought and voice of love. That arbour in that short space of time had witnessed many a

scene, such as make young hearts beat, and bright eyes glisten with emotion. But now its purpose was changed; and when on this evening Camille Desmoulins, entered the garden, there was one cry "To the theatre," and this young man, this almost boy, whose voice could charm the crowd, was carried rather than dragged to the scene of his triumph. Who would not be a republican when in a few nights such fame can be attained? So thought the youth of France, as they listened to the stirring eloquence.

For he burst forth in a spirit rather Athenian than Spartan, such as befitted his audience; the glowing pictures which he drew of a golden age; the bursts of contempt at old and worn-out creeds; the new faith of love and reason; the bitterness with which he inveighed against kingcraft and priestcraft; and then the Saturnian reign he foreshadowed; the universal fraternity, love and peace; the homage which he paid to

passions, as the elements of life, derived, as he said it, not from God, but from the gods ; —all this the young orator passed in review with an eloquence which bore the whole vast assemblage with him, as he stood there, glowing with grace and force, worthy of the days of Pericles.

Nor was it only the crowd below that listened with such attention, and who, at each pause in this wild oration, expressed their approbation by frantic applause ; most of the windows of the magnificent apartments on the principal floor were thrown open, and disclosed to the multitude below, scenes well calculated to awaken their cupidity, and which formed not an inappropriate commentary on some of the orator's most powerful sentences. In one long room a table might be seen, covered with the most extravagant plate, while the light of innumerable chandeliers was reflected back from mirrors which formed almost one side of the saloon ; nor was it the

light alone which dazzled by its blaze, but glowing beneath were forms eloquent with beauty, such as Ionia loved to cherish. There in feasting, revelling, and in wantonness they sat ; and by their sides were men, too, eminent for brilliant talent and corrupted energies. With sparkling glasses, and looks full of excitement, they turned from the wit and the jest, to listen to the genius of young France. Here were locks, dark as those which southern Italy can boast of, shoulders like the Parian marble in which their charms were sculptured, decorated with brilliant ornaments which virtue might pine for in vain ; and over all, that atmosphere of luxury, of love and poetry, which possesses such charms for youth, and which conceals the deformities of the worst vices.

But all the apartments were not of this description. There were others in which the attention was so devoted to one object, that no eloquence, however burning, could obtain

the notice of one of this society. Round a table, covered with gold, men and women sat, with wolfish gaze fixed on the prize. Vultures feasting at a grave could not have gloated with more eagerness on their prey. The eyes were starting out of their sockets with excitement, and on many a cheek was that one spot of red, which is the true token of the heart beneath. Here also were women of a class somewhat inferior, painted, bedizened with the spoils of many hearts. What to them did it matter that the nation was in a convulsion, so long as the table was not shaken and the bank could pay? When the shouts of the mob deafened even the loud voices of the players, all the attention were deeper curses at the execrable *canaille*.

And that nothing might be wanting to fill up the picture of these strange, wild, fearful existences thus thrown together, the theatre of the Palais Royal spread its lures, and pandered to the passions which it pre-

tended to direct. “*La Bonne République*,” and “*Le Bourreau Bienfaisant*,” were the kind of plays selected to gratify the public mind; and here hearts not yet thoroughly depraved were well taught in the school of iniquity. The stage sent forth her hundreds to swell the crowds, who thronged, throughout the night, every avenue to vice and folly.

Such a spectacle did the Palais Royal exhibit in July, 1789. If, Asmodeus-like, these palaces, gilded saloons, side by side with loathsome garrets, could have been unroofed, what scenes would have been disclosed! but still more, if all these hearts could have been laid open to view, what ambitions, what passions, what fearfully degrading vices would have been exhibited! And this was the France for whom philosophers and schoolmen were seeking a new faith to be founded on purity, while it was baptized in blood.

There was one room in the *Café de la*

Régence of which the windows were not opened, even when the excitement without was most intense. In it there was a large party collected of the wealthiest men in the capital, and the object of this meeting was to complete the arrangements for the negotiation of a loan, which was to enrich them still more. Everything was splendid as possible—the decoration of the table, such as might have been expected, where men were reckless of money in a reckless age. But amid all the excitement of the table, there was a certain gravity, which, contrasted strangely with the glare and bustle out of doors; when the tumult became so great that it was with difficulty that the conversation could be carried on, one of the party desired that the heavy curtains should be closed to keep out the noise of this “tas de canaille”—the expression was used by M. Langeac, and it was overheard by a man who did not forget it.

M. Langeac was now verging upon middle

age ; but in an incredibly short period, he had, by fortunate speculations, amassed a fortune which was remarkable, even in those days, when, through court favour, the *fermiers-généraux* were amongst the most successful speculators of the day ; for some time past, he and his associates had urged the court to resist the wishes of the nation, the object being to increase the popular movement precisely to that extent, when they might hold the threads of every negotiation in their own hands. So far the result had realized their intentions. Some of these gentlemen had that very day returned from Versailles, where they had found the king in great trouble, and well he might be, for the whole aspect of public affairs was calculated to alarm even the most confident of these gentlemen. They were well aware that, in the event of a disturbance, the first people sacrificed would be the detested *accapareurs* ; and on this occasion, when the shouts of the

mob echoed through the salle, there were some who turned pale, and spoke of emigration. And amongst the latter was M. Langeac.

The party broke up as such parties do when business is to be combined with festivity—without having come to any decision as to their future proceeding; but it was settled that they were to meet again that day three weeks, during which interval the position of public affairs would become much more ascertained. Three weeks, at such a moment, were equal to three years of any ordinary period. Before that time, events were to occur calculated to shake those persons who hoped to take advantage of the errors and follies of others.

It was very late when the party sallied forth; and even the Palais Royal was deserted, save by a few careworn, pale countenances prowling about with dark and sinister designs. The festal lights in most of the windows had died out, like the orgies which

they had illuminated ; but instead of these, the bright moon rose on the beautiful quadrangle, and the cool breeze seemed to purify the air from the sin and pollution which had contaminated it.

If from some room where the low gambler was revelling, and debauchery was hiding herself, not for shame, but for secret crime, the brutal laugh or the wild, broken, bacchanalian song burst forth—it added, by its contrast, to the stillness and perfect beauty of the scene without. The cool murmurings of the fountains, which had been overruled by the accents of passion and ambition, now soothed the heart into repose ; the perfume of the orange-blossom scented the night air. If Nature had been outraged, if her scenes of beauty had been desecrated by crime, still how she loved man. Over all who slept, her blue, star-spangled mantle was thrown—those stars which seem like angels' eyes,—full of light and gentle glory.

The party separated, and M. Langeac, with his friend, M. Gouvion, walked towards his home. They passed by the Théâtre Français, crossed the Rue St. Honoré, and then wended their way through all the narrow streets which choked up every avenue from the Tuileries, to the borders of the Seine. On their way, there was nothing to attract their attention but the occasional tramp of the patrol. The only indication of any movement beyond the ordinary routine of the life of a great city, were the regiments of Royal Cravate and of Château Vieux, bivouacking in one of the small squares adjoining the Louvre. Here the sentinels were lounging about in their long white cloaks, and the only cry heard was that of “Qui v’la ! La France ?” “Yes, la France !” How long was that France, the France of the old monarchy of Charlemagne and St. Louis, to live ?

Monsieur Langeac and his friend leaned against the parapet of the quay, and contem-

plated the scene which lay expanded before them ; the river rolling onward in its hoarse monotony ; the dark waters eddying round the buttresses of the bridge, and then hurrying through, as though loth to tarry on their way. The moonlight streaming over the mighty city ; the towers of Nôtre Dame, the tall pinnacles of the Conciergerie, the gilded turrets of the Palais de Justice, church, prison, and palace all slumbering in peace ; the broken outline of the lofty, steep-roofed houses of the Isle of France claimed such a pencil as Canaletti devoted to Venice ; and it seemed to M. Langeac that city never was more beautiful than Paris by night.

M. Gouvion turned round, and he saw that the tears stood on M. Langeac's cheek.

“ You are unhappy, my friend,” he said.

“ I am, indeed, Gouvion,” said M. Langeac. “ I was thinking of all this fortune I have been accumulating, and the vanity of all things painfully strikes me ; I ask myself for

what object have I toiled so long. You saw that boy who was walking with me one day, You admired the lad—his fine open countenance. I do not think you were aware that he was my son, I had settled the whole of my property upon him, all this fortune I have toiled so uselessly to gain ; for that poor boy is dead.”

“I am sorry to hear that,” said M. Gouvion. “When did he die?”

“About six weeks since,” replied M. Langeac.

“You never mentioned it. I observed your deep melancholy, but had no idea what had caused it.”

“Why tell these things?” said M. Langeac, with a sad smile ; “it does not affect the exchange. It does not operate on *La Hausse* or *La Baisse*. Who cares for one life the less ? there are plenty to replace it. What does that young Cleon, who was haranguing this night in the Palais Royal,

care how many lives are sacrificed if his vanity is gratified? Never say anything to men, unless the subject is of interest to the listeners, not to you who are speaking."

"But you told me once of another child you possessed, called Florence. Indeed, I remember I was of that party at Fontainebleau, when first you met the mother. She was exquisitely beautiful. You have seldom spoken of her since."

"My dear friend," said M. Langeac, with a deep sigh, "I behaved so ill to her that it is a subject I have scarcely dared to think of. I married the poor girl and lived with her a short time after Florence was born; while all the time I was privately married to Estelle. You know what an influence she obtained over me, through her boy. She insisted on my turning Louise out of her house, and she then resided in one of the faubourgs. I cannot tell you how often my heart has relented; but the

influence of Estelle was as great as it was unaccountable. She died last year of consumption, and this poor boy, you see, has been carried off in the same manner. Such is Nemesis."

"But why do you not see that daughter, who you say is so beautiful?"

"It is exactly what I desired to do. I was in the neighbourhood of Strasburg when Claude died. I had been a long time residing in Russia, on account of that transaction in which Laurison involved me. As you are aware, Gouvion, I have not been in Paris at all for the last five or six years. Well, I sent to a friend, who I thought was likely to know Louise's address, as she generally draws her money through him, and he told me he thought that she was residing, under the name of Madame Brinville, at Mont d'Or, somewhere near Tours, where her family lived. I wrote to her an urgent letter, but have not received one line of reply; but this lone-

liness is so great that I am resolved to see her again, and make her all the retribution in my power ; surely now that Estelle is no more, Louise is my legitimate wife, and a nobler, purer creature never existed. It is quite impossible for me to leave Paris now, but I shall write and implore her to come here. I will give her child every penny of my fortune, and very likely, after all this is arranged, blow my brains out, in order that she may enjoy my fortune at once, and I may get rid of this existence, which I feel to be such a load, and walk out of the world like a gentleman, instead of being hung up to one of these lamp-posts."

"Why, you do not like the signs of the times," said M. Gouvion.

"Like them !" caught up M. Langeac, with a laugh of irony, "I shall take good care to get clear of this country as soon as possible, and lodge myself where all

my money is lodged, on the other side of the Channel. I would not trust these madmen with a sou. Depend upon it, Gouvion, this is no longer a country for gentlemen."

"Above all, for the *fermiers-généraux*," said M. Gouvion, with a laugh.

"Very true," replied M. Langeac. "You have given me matter for agreeable reflection in that observation. Good-night to you, Gouvion. Here we are, at the Rue St. Dominique."

CHAPTER X.

THE RUE ST. DOMINIQUE.

AMONG all the aristocrats of the age immediately preceding the revolution, none were more aristocratic than those men who had realized their colossal fortunes on the Bourse, and by undertaking government contracts. Speculation in 1789, while the finances of the country were paralyzed, was almost as active as in the days of Law and Dubois ; and the Place de la Bourse was as much thronged as La Rue Quincampoix had been nearly half a century previously ; the Faubourg St. Ger-

main, that most exclusive of all quarters, was invaded by these *nouveaux riches* ; and one reason why the aristocracy of the capital excited so much indignation amongst the people was, that, in consequence of this emigration across the Seine, they were mixed up involuntarily with all the vulgarities and impertinences of the monied interest. Of this class, M. Langeac was the most eminent, and possessed one of the most magnificent hotels. The dimly lighted street scarcely enabled him to distinguish the massive gates which were thrown open when he rang the Concierge's bell. He entered into a wide court, at the end of which was a flight of steps which conducted to the *entresol*. Those who had the privilege of visiting him in his grandeur were struck with the magnificence displayed throughout the wide suite of rooms which he inhabited ; it was quite a new hotel, recently purchased. The death of his son had prevented him

making that extravagant display which he would otherwise have desired ; not that M. Langeac was a vulgar-minded man, but he had studied human nature deeply, and he well knew the importance of appearance in all societies, but above all other societies, in those of the great financiers of the day.

The events of that night had made a deeper impression on M. Langeac than they had on the other persons who composed the party at the *Café de la Régence* ; he felt persuaded that the country was on the eve of a revolution ; and he was not speaking idly when he said that he should make arrangements to reside in England, taking with him Madame Brinville and Florence. He resolved, therefore, the next morning to send her another urgent letter ; and that letter, as we have seen, had the effect of inducing Madame Brinville to leave Mont d'Or in the hurried manner which has been described.

The Bastille had fallen ; the king had entered Paris, and been accepted as the *Roi de la Bourgeoisie*. For the moment, it was thought that all danger was at an end ; and the French public are so impressionable that in Paris many sharp-sighted men were of opinion that the government would now go on without any difficulty, that all ambitions were at rest, and that a new era, and an Augustan era, was inaugurated. Not so M. Langeac. He had been present in the *Hôtel de Ville* on that evening when the Bastille fell ; he had noted the savage expression of those men who, whenever an insurrection breaks out in Paris, issue forth at once from all its foul places, with cadaverous and ghastly appearance.

He had seen Maillard, and Jourdan with his hands steeped in blood, and had heard the savage expressions of Saint Méry, as he strode, pike in hand, at the head of his detachment of ruffians. From that moment,

his own mind was made up ; for, as he had expressed it, the only choice soon left a gentleman would be, whether he would blow out his brains, or be hung up at a lamp-post.

It was three mornings after he had written the second time to Mont d'Or, that he received a letter from Madame Brinville to inform him that, although very ill, she would in a very few hours be with Florence on the road to Paris. This had the effect of lightening his heart more than he could have believed possible ; all his affections seemed to flow again in their old channels ; and the first thing he did, was to write to his agent in London, giving him directions for the settlement, first on Madame Brinville and then on Florence, of the vast property which he had accumulated. When the heart is light and happy, it is predisposed to kind and generous conduct, although in this instance such an act was no more than one of simple

justice. After this he went down to Versailles to see one of the ministers, and to stroll through that glorious park and those beautiful gardens. There he forgot the scenes of violence and outrage which had been recently enacted. Contrasting this cheerful and happy landscape with the distress and misery which it had been so often his lot to witness in the metropolis, he formed plans for the future, in which all the affections had their proper place, while repentance and hope were leading his mind to nobler and better thoughts, than those which he had unfortunately been accustomed to entertain for many dreary years.

It was nearly two o'clock when he left the gardens; but whereas on his arrival at Versailles there had been no appearance of any agitation, it was now evident that some event had occurred to give rise to much excitement. Aides-de-camp were galloping through the

streets, and on the Grande Place he saw the Royal Pologne and Diesbach's corps, with their bright scarlet plumes, under arms. As he was acquainted with the colonel of the latter regiment, he stopped to ask him the news.

And then he learned that the mob were expected to rise that evening in Paris, and some of the leaders had been heard to plan an attack on Versailles ; all the troops within the circuit of a dozen miles were ordered to concentrate between Paris and Versailles, under command of the Maréchal de Broglie. "If that is your carriage," said the colonel, pointing to Monsieur Langeac's conveyance, "you had better lose no time in returning, for the roads will soon be impassable from the troops and artillery ; for at the first attack we shall this time give the mob, a lesson which they will not soon forget."

Monsieur Langeac took the advice, and was soon on the road to Paris, but not sooner

than was absolutely necessary. Already on each side of the road soldiers were gathered in groups, waiting for orders, and for the tents, which were far in the rear. The plains of Grenelle were covered with masses of troops; but there was a strange and almost preternatural silence amidst such numbers of men. They were beginning to make preparations for encamping that night, but there was none of the joyful excitement of a camp. "Il faut que tout cela finisse," was the expression M. Langeac heard constantly repeated. Yes, but how was it to finish? This was the question which suggested itself to him as he rolled along.

Arrived at the barrier, he saw that the avenue was full of the German auxiliaries, mingled with some Swiss, in that uniform which their gallantry has rendered so famous. Here the appearance of mistrust had much increased; patrols at every corner preserved

the lines of communication, while heavy detachments of cavalry traversed the bridges and *allées* of the Champs Elysées ; and yet in the midst of all this precaution, everything seemed so silent and so still—even more so than usual, for the carriages which attempted to traverse La Place Louis XV. were ordered to take another route. A terror *glacé* fell on the hearts of all people—a terror the more terrible, that no one knew exactly whence the danger was to come, or what he feared.

And assuredly M. Langeac was not exempt from these impressions as he drove along ; when after many delays and difficulties he reached the quay which is overlooked by the gardens of the Tuileries, his alarm was not relieved, when he observed that the whole of the space between the Tuileries gardens and the river was occupied by a dense mob. What they were doing, M. Langeac could not distinguish ;

and unfortunately his coachman drove into the midst of the people before he perceived the danger into which he was running ; but he was soon enlightened on the subject, for on looking out of the window, he saw that it was a kind of procession—such as the mob had lately been in the habit of extemporizing, men in rags and tatters, bearing banners with pictures of Liberty, whose features being in general cut out of white calico, had no particular recommendation, except what the imagination could lend them ; and then followed men with lances and bucklers, which had been stolen from various old armouries ; and instead of the roll of drums, they carried bells, whose hideous din possessed at least one merit, that they drowned the clamours of the savage, ruffianly mob.

On this occasion they did more—they drowned the shrieks of a victim, hurried onwards towards eternity. It was Foullon whom they had in their power ; that poor man, against

whom public indignation had been so much excited, as one of that band of *accapareurs* of which M. Langeac was so prominent a member, had been discovered concealed at Viry, near Paris, and was destined to expiate the indignation of the people against the *fermiers-généraux*. He had been accused of saying: "On devrait faucher Paris comme on fauche un pré;" but that was nothing. He was supposed to enhance the price of grain, and to poison the wells of Paris. Such were the charges brought against an old man of seventy-four, one who was incapable of injuring any man. It was not until the carriage had advanced to the very centre of the mob, that M. Langeac perceived that they were dragging some one with them. But what was his horror on looking closer to observe the features of a man so well known to him, and with whom he was so intimate as Foullon.

To throw himself back in the carriage,

and bear unmoved the insults which were heaped upon the aristocrats, was his first impulse. In spite of the republican nature of the crowd, there still lingered something of respect for wealth and rank. The instinct of property was not yet entirely uprooted ; the people thought they were doing an act of justice, and would but sully it, by any deed of pillage or violence ; so amidst hootings and jeers the carriage was allowed to proceed. Unfortunately for M. Langeac, the crowd was greatest at the Pont Royal which led to the Faubourg St. Germain. He waited a little time for it to make way ; and at last, in his anxiety, put his head out of the window, when his poor friend Foullon, who was dragged along, his hands tied behind his back, and a huge sack of corn placed on his shoulders, saw him, and exclaimed : “ Langeac, à moi—à moi.”

It was the expression of a desperate man, or he would have seen its inutility ; but it

was sufficient for the mob. "Quoi, c'est Langeac !" was vociferated on all sides ; "à bas les accapareurs !" The coachman saw that the crisis was a desperate one ; but the horses were full of fire, and, when he flogged them violently, they sprang, as it were, over two or three people, and the mob made way, while curses were hurled from all sides, shouts, imprecations and deadly threats being mingled with the dying groans of Foullon.

The carriage dashed on, but there was one man who, unperceived by the coachman, never left it ; it was the very waiter of the Café de la Régence before whom M. Langeac had used the phrase "un tas de canaille !" When the carriage rolled into the court of the hotel in the Rue St. Dominique, he jumped down, and went up to the Place de Grève to inform his companions where M. Langeac resided. He found the tragedy of Foullon consummated ; the unfortunate man had been dragged under a lamp, the cord

passed round his neck ; twice the cord broke, and the wretched old man fell on his knees to implore mercy ; even some of these savages began to relent ; but the people called for blood—they were thirsty ; a third cord was sent for, which proved effectual, and the dead lay on the ground, an object of gross and sensual insult.

At this moment, the man who had followed M. Langeac arrived breathless and pale with excitement. “ Comrades ! ” he shouted, with a stentorian voice, “ it was Langeac, who insulted the majesty of the people ! I know where he lives in the Rue St. Dominique ; it is the same man who I myself heard a few nights since call us—call the nation—a ‘ tas de canaille ! ’ En avant, down with Langeac ! down with all the accapareurs ! vive la nation ! ”

And the vast crowd moved on, bearing as their *oriflamme* the head of Foullon with the mouth stuffed with corn, to exemplify

in their hideous poetry the avariciousness of the *fermiers-généraux*. On they moved, in something like order, tramp, tramp, along the quay, until they reached the Pont Henri IV., when they deposited Foullon's body in the Morgue.

Meanwhile, M. Langeac retired into his bureau, and having sent a note to M. Gouvion praying him to come to him as soon as possible, and another to Colonel Deprès of the Regiment de Provence, which was quartered in the neighbourhood, imploring him to send a detachment to his assistance, he commenced at once to make preparations for his own departure, and wrote directions to M. Gouvion, and final instructions to Madame Brinville, with which he proposed to charge M. Gouvion. The latter arrived immediately, and having heard nothing of these events, was surprised to observe M. Langeac's agitation. He was soon informed of the danger which menaced him.

“ Here,” said M. Langeac, “ as my best friend, I charge you with a mission which involves interests dearer to me than my life. Lose not a moment ! go to the village of Mont d’Or, not far from Tours ; the great road passes through Blois and Amboise, but you can take a shorter by turning off at La Ferté St. Aubin. At Mont d’Or, inquire for Madame Brinville ; if she has not left, give her these papers, and beg her to remain in safety, until she hears again from me. If she should have started, I will tell you where you will gain every information about her and my daughter—at the old château of M. de Soligny. My father at one time did him a great service, and he will, I am sure, do all in his power to assist you, and show you every kindness, for the sake of his son.

“ I will do everything you desire,” said M. Gouvion ; “ you saved me from misery when fate scowled upon me ; nothing that I can do shall be wanting. I will, if necessary, be off

this evening, meanwhile, lose not an instant in providing for your own safety."

At this moment the door was burst open by the maître-d'hôtel, pale and trembling with fear: "The mob," he said, "are turning up from the Rue de Lille; they carry the head of a man on a pike, and the shout is 'à bas les accapareurs! à bas Langeac!'"

M. Langeac turned very pale, but retained all his self-command. "Gouvion, mon ami, adieu!" he said; "there is not a moment to lose. In the court you will find the clothes of some workman; put them over yours. If the mob should break in, mix with them immediately, and then slip out at the gates. As for myself I have, I think, still the means of escape; there is a closet here, where I am not likely to be discovered for some time, and meanwhile the troops cannot be far off."

The friends embraced for the last time, and were soon prepared for the crisis. Not too soon, for the mob was already at the

gates. From his hiding-place M. Langeac could hear the terrible imprecations, the yells of indignation, the refrains of ribaldry with which his name was greeted; but presently, to his delight, he heard the cry of: "The soldiers! the soldiers! à vous, mes amis!" And so it was, two strong detachments of the Provence and Royal Cravate, with their helmets glittering and swords flashing in the sun, came at the *pas de charge* down the Rue St. Dominique. For a moment the crowd wavered; M. Langeac heard the exclamations of terror; he was saved. But what is this? Why do they not charge? Why do they hesitate? "Vive la cavalerie! vive les bons enfans!" The clang of the horses' hoofs has ceased; all that is heard is the movement of troops dressing their ranks. "Charge, in God's name!" cries the unhappy Langeac, as though his voice could be heard through the thickness of the walls and above the din

without. Then comes a shout, a terrible shout; again the tramp of the horses' hoofs is heard, but they are receding—they have refused to act.

Oh! moments of suspense!—moments of misery! But not for long; presently the gates were burst open. M. Gouvion mingled for one instant with the mob, and disappeared. The servants were all allowed to escape. They only sought one victim—it was Langeac. They searched high and low, but he was not to be found. They were even about to withdraw, and again M. Langeac thought he was saved, when that evil genius who had repeated the expression, “Le tas de canaille,” uttered one word which made M. Langeac's blood curdle with horror—“Le feu!” It was hailed with delight! and in that very room in which he was so cunningly concealed, straw was set on fire; the smoke rolling round and round was driven through the door. M. Langeac then felt that concealment was

hopeless ; the door opened, and the man stood forth—the man of the people.

Then rose a shout louder than any—more sincere than any that had ever greeted his financial triumphs. “Il est à nous !” But no ! he had a pistol in each hand. Pale and resolute, he said :

“The first that approaches me, I fire.”

They hesitated ; for although there were but two pistols, they represented two lives. But those behind pushed the others forward ; and true enough, two men fell, one of them the arch-scoundrel who had lured on the mob.

“There are but two deaths ; he shall die a hundred times. Take him to the Place de la Bourse ! hang him on the spot where he sold the bread of the people ! Mark how pale he is. Where are his riches now ? Where is the home beyond the waves he hoped to have procured for himself ? Drag him along ! The people have triumphed ; justice is

vindicated.—Give him Foullon's lips to kiss !” Such a mob had collected together as only Paris can collect in a few hours time. The quays, the bridges were all crowded with people. Not a soldier was to be seen ; and from that vast multitude not one cry of pity arose. A hackney carriage was seized, and M. Langeac placed on the roof, that he might be exposed to the pitiless gaze of his relentless persecutors. And yet, how beautiful the city looked on this evening ! how the darting rays of the sun gilded the sloping roofs of the princely Tuileries. Langeac gazed on the gardens where he had passed so many happy hours. He recalled one day when he sat under a noble tree, with Louise, and Florence, a mere infant, playing at his feet. The whole of his life seemed to pass in review before him, all his days of love, of repose, of stirring ambition, of pitiless error, and slavish selfishness. Oh ! but for one hour—but one hour to recal the past—to recover his strength !

It was like a horrible dream. The shouts and yells of that fearful people demanding his blood! His heart was full of glimpses of his childhood, and his ears with the foul ribaldry of abandoned cruelty. Mercy! mercy! but whence was it to come? Were there no women to implore it for him? Ay! there were women, and one of these climbed to the top of the carriage, and whispered in his ear:

“If they will give me your heart, I will wear it round my neck. I had two sons who died of starvation, while you battered on the bread of the people.”

What an age the journey seems, and death glaring for its victim! Will the Place de la Bourse never be reached? Ah, yes! it bursts on view, and high in the centre stands a rude machine; and in the person of M. Langeac a great experiment will be made. The hat is knocked from his head. “Salute, Sir,

the majesty of the guillotine." And all the people with one loud, deafening shout hailed the inauguration of the reign of blood.

CHAPTER XI.

MONSIEUR GOUVION.

THE work of destruction, when once it has fairly commenced, is always so rapid—it takes many years to construct and a moment to destroy. With this fact always present to us, it is marvellous, not that there are so few remains of the past to be found, but that any exist. Here, in the Rue St. Dominique, stood an hotel massively built, with a noble portico, worthy, in all respects, of the days of the proud old nobility of

France, at a time when France was a school of science, art, and chivalry, to every other nation. Who could have imagined that, in one brief half-hour, all this reality would have been converted into a heap of ruins ; and that the man who had resided there, and had passed all his life in accumulating wealth it was never intended he should enjoy, would have been dragged through the streets a prisoner in the hands of an infuriated mob ?

Monsieur Gouvion, terrified and horror-struck, did not wait to see this consummation of his friend's calamity ; he hurried through the street as rapidly as the dense mob would allow him, to the guard-house, where, in general, a detachment of troops was posted. To his surprise, he found it deserted ; instead of soldiers guarding the bridges and the approaches to the quays, were bands of miserable wretches, in rags and tatters, dancing wildly to the air of " *Cà ira.* "

Monsieur Gouvion owed the facility with which he was permitted to traverse the crowd to his rude workman's dress. For the first time, the man of the Bourse felt the advantage of being mistaken for one of that people whom he had so long despised. He was so occupied with the scene presented to him, that he forgot when he arrived at the Champ de Mars—to which place he hastened — that his appearance was not such as to secure a favourable reception at the head-quarters of the field-marshal. Here the troops remaining in the metropolis were collected. From all the avenues of the Champs Elysées, cavalry and artillery were pouring in. The men wore a sulky appearance; they lounged on their horses as if perfectly indifferent to the result of the contest between the court and the people. Some of the officers might be seen with their teeth set, and their hands firmly grasping the sword, as if they only asked for the

opportunity of retrieving the honour of their corps.

No band played, no drums rolled—tramp, tramp, tramp, in all directions ; but not one regiment moved towards that spot where their presence might have rescued one man from a violent death, and a nation from their first cold-blooded crime. Monsieur Gouvion hurried through the mass of troops at the risk of being knocked down by the horses, or driven over by artillery waggons ; and no one seemed to notice him, until he asked a soldier on duty to be permitted to pass to the head-quarters ; and then the term “*sacré canaille*,” with which he was greeted, showed him that there was still one soldier left, who, whatever dereliction of duty he might hereafter be guilty of in the name of the nation, had at present no sympathy with the low fanatics, who arrogated to themselves the title of the people.

It was in vain that Monsieur Gouvion

declared that he was a gentleman who had found it necessary to assume a disguise, for the purpose of protecting himself from that very *canaille* which the sentinel denounced, and that he had an important communication to make at the head-quarters ; all he could obtain, was that the guard was called, and he was marched off, not as a gentleman who was performing a duty, but as one of the mob before whom the troops had retreated. Fortunately, as it happened, as they were passing by the Ecole Militaire, they met Monsieur de Ferronaye, who was commandant-en-chef of the cavalry, and with whom he was well acquainted. He was riding at the head of a numerous and splendid staff. Aides-de-camp were galloping about in all directions, and the bustle and excitement were so great, that if, at the moment, M. Gouvion had not, at the risk of his life, made a desperate rush towards the general, he could not have succeeded in attracting his attention.

“How is this, Gouvion?” said the general. “What does this mean? Where do you come from in this strange costume?”

M. Gouvion took the general aside, and told him what danger M. Langeac was placed in, and that the only hope of saving him was to send off a strong detachment to occupy the Place de la Bourse, where he had heard the mob say they intended to drag poor Langeac.

“Good God!” exclaimed M. de Ferronaye, “is it possible? But what can I do? All my detachments have been called in; the orders are to retire before the people, if we are attacked, and to concentrate all the forces between Paris and Versailles, for it seems that the mob meditate an attack on the palace. The court,” whispered the general, in a low tone, “are preparing for flight—the wisest thing they could do, for soon flight will be out of the question. As for

my men, they are quite demoralized. If they had been permitted to fight, there would have been some chance; but now I cannot trust half of them. Besides, if I could spare two regiments, what could they do against such a mob as I hear is collected on the quays and in the Rue St. Honoré?"

Who could have believed, to have gazed on those masses of troops, in line after line, stretching from the Ecole Militaire to the Seine, on the artillery, which was parked at the wings of the cavalry and infantry, that a kingdom was in danger? Ay, but of what avail are bayonets? you cannot slumber upon them in peace, and be pillowed on cannons. If the heart of the man is wanting, what avail the arms that the soldiers bear? If ever there was a lesson given to courts, it was on this day. Paris in possession of a mob, while an army of some

forty thousand men was in possession of the Champ de Mars.

A sudden thought struck M. de Ferronaye.

“It is too horrible !” he said. “I cannot endure the thought that poor Langeac is perhaps at this moment being dragged to an awful death, and that I am making no effort to save him. It will be quite impossible for any troops to pass along the quays or by the Boulevards ; but I will send two regiments—the Royal Allemand and the St. Denis—round by the narrow streets which skirt the Boulevards, with orders to debouche across the Boulevards on the Place de la Bourse. If they can occupy the Place before the arrival of the mob with their victim, Langeac may still be saved. You may accompany them, Gouvion, if you like ; but my advice is, whether successful or not, you look out for yourself when once the troops

retire. Depend upon it, that they will have hard fighting before they reach St. Cloud, where I shall give them orders to retreat upon."

In a moment the orders were given, and the troops were in movement. The regiments of Provence and the St. Denis were two of the most loyal and devoted in the service. Many of the officers had been educated with Louis XVI., when, as a child, he formed a mimic regiment, which he used to drill, on fête-days, in the court of the Tuileries. Colonel Neuville remarked to Monsieur Gouvion, as he rode by his side :

"Only two years, since the voyage to Strasburg, when the king was greeted with cheers louder than those which had ever saluted the ears of any other monarch. What can be the cause of this sudden change in the destinies of the house of Bourbon?"

Alas ! poor House of Bourbon ! If this is the commencement of its misfortunes, tell us where they are to end. If the first stone has now been torn from its battlements, tell us how long the foundations shall endure. But not without glory, even to this house, are its calamities. It is something to be great and generous in prosperity, but surely it is a greater praise to be great and generous in adversity. But, be it said, in these days—in 1789—if the people rose against their father and their king, there was, at least, sympathy felt and expressed by other nations. It was well understood, that for the maintenance of monarchy in Europe, a *solidarité des rois* was one essential requirement ; the terms of “ Monsieur mon frère,” in which sovereigns addressed each other, was then not a mere empty phrase, and nations had not yet learnt that a crime once committed, an outrage once

consummated, the phrase, "un fait accompli," would be considered at once its justification and apology.

The troops crossed the bridge of the Place Louis XV. just as the mob, who bore M. Langeac with them, were passing under the arch which led into the court of the Tuileries. From the bridge it was a fine sight, that mass of people, extending as far as the eye could reach. Now the Faubourg St. Antoine was in motion, and the quay, as far as the Hôtel de Ville, was covered with the various sections bearing banners, the inscriptions on which, at that distance, were illegible, but which, it was too well known, represented not unfrequently the brutality, which the mob were only too well prepared to exercise on any aristocrat, who had the bad fortune to fall into their hands.

The soldiers seemed to feel that they were on the eve of a terrible struggle, for they marched in perfect silence, without one word

of encouragement or defiance. On the Place Louis XV. a few stragglers were collected ; but the force was too imposing, and the attitude of the soldiers too determined, to admit of their daring to insult, or endeavouring to lure them from their duty ; to the unpractised eye, these two regiments appeared a force no mob could possibly resist.

They crossed the Boulevard without attracting much observation ; the people in that neighbourhood were gossiping over the events of the day, rather than taking any active part in them ; and the selfishness of the *bourgeoisie*—of that *bourgeoisie* who would not raise one finger in defence of the crown, was apparent in the hurry and excitement in which they were closing all their shops.

There were no drums, no music, nothing to lighten the weight with which the tramp of the soldiers fell on Monsieur Gouvion's heart ; he knew instinctively that their attempt to

rescue M. Langeac was quite hopeless ; at the same time, he was most grateful to M. de Ferronaye for making it. To die without one struggle for life, to perish without one hand raised in your defence, oh ! it would be too terrible to think of.

But if the crowd collected on the quays, bridges, and house-tops — anywhere from which a view of the sad procession dragging Monsieur Langeac to execution—was ominous and fearful, not less so was the silence and the desertion of these streets through which the troops were passing. Now and then a shutter was opened, and then hastily closed. At that moment the feeling and the regret even of these stern soldiers, was that they were regarded universally with the most bitter of all sentiments—that of mistrust.

It was in passing the great Opera House, that Monsieur Gouvoin was overcome with the painful contrast of the past and the present of France. But one year since, he had

been present when the queen went there in state, surrounded with that young, gay, and brilliant court of which she was more than queen. How brightly the *salle* had been illuminated on that occasion ! how beautiful were the forms on which that light had fallen, when poetry and music lent charms even to the expression of love ! And there sat the Princesse de Lamballe, with that sweet oval countenance, and that delicate form, which seemed to embody all the qualities of grace and loveliness, which young dreamers in early youth picture, but, rarely, if ever witness. A gay and happy court, which the king, as he stood in that box, appeared not unmeted to rule over ; for the difference between his homeliness of manner and dress, the good, honest, simple countenance, pleased the people, when it was contrasted with the atmosphere of luxury, of elegance and refinement, in which queen and courtier alike revelled. With what shouts on that evening of “ *Vive la Reine !* ”

was the court greeted, for the queen had just founded a new hospital, and had styled herself, in gracious and courtly language, *La Mère des Pauvres*. Who could have believed that in one short year all this feeling, all these affections on the part of the people, would have been replaced by such evil passions? or that the gloomy, silent building near which the troops were passing, had been the scene of such joyous festivity and courtly triumph?

As the soldiers were about to defile on to the Boulevard, the detachment of cavalry which preceded them, of the regiment of *Royal Cravate*, halted; the crowd was so dense, that it was impossible to proceed without clearing the way by force; but force employed in such a spot, must be infallibly attended with fearful results. Moreover, Colonel Neuville had observed a crowd of men on the tops of the houses, who were evidently collecting materials for a violent

assault on the troops, in the event of their making any serious demonstration.

But the object—namely, to save Monsieur Langeac—was now at an end, the distance between the Tuileries and the Place de la Bourse, was far greater than that which the troops had been compelled to traverse; and, moreover, in the narrow streets, they had been forced to move very slowly. As the colonel advanced at the head of the column, he saw a great body of men, preceded by flags, deboucheing from the Rue Vivienne. They bore something in front on a pike; even at that distance he could discover it to be a human head, and the colonel felt at once that the tragedy he was ordered to prevent, had been consummated.

Soon, there was no room for doubt in the matter. The mob made way for the hideous procession, and Monsieur Gouvion saw with horror the features of his friend, who but a few moments since had been

full of life and expression. And there was one woman seated on that hackney carriage which had borne the poor victim to his doom, she had fulfilled her horrible engagement, the heart of the dead man was suspended round her neck ; and beside her were certain beings in woman's form, but assuredly with the hearts of furies in Hell. They were singing ribald songs, with licentious gesture, while the mob savagely applauded this desecration of all that is beautiful and noble in creation.

Fearful reflection is it, and one borne out by sad and oft-repeated evidence, that when woman is abandoned, it seems as though any virtue she once possessed becomes a snare to lure her on to deeper guilt ; as angels of light fall to gloomiest darkness, as the loftiest spires that point heavenward, if they do fall, the crash is most terrible. Never was woman's influence exercised for sadder object than during the period which we are

describing. None could believe that those gentle cheeks could glow with fiendish delight at the death-struggles of the victims of the revolution, and that hands so delicate could be steeped in blood.

When the mob arrived in front of the Rue Peltier, and saw all the troops massed in that narrow street, they halted. Maddened with blood, the leaders proposed to force a passage ; it was then that Colonel Neuville desired the men to stand to their arms. Three times, as the mob were approaching, he ordered them to withdraw ; three times his command was listened to with a shout of defiance ; then came the order to fire. The mob, crushed together, suffered as much from each other, as they did from the destructive and well-directed fire ; and the scene of conflict, the groans and shrieks of the wounded, and dying, were terrible preludes to the coming struggle.

To force a passage down the whole length

of the Boulevards, so as to obey Monsieur de Ferronaye's orders to retreat on St. Cloud, was now out of the question. All that could be done was, to march back by the same streets they had arrived; but the mob were before them; and once in the narrow streets, they found them occupied by a crowd almost as dense as that which they had left behind them.

Fearful was the sacrifice of life in the two loyal and gallant regiments, cut to pieces in detail. At length the men broke up into small detachments. Both colonels fell; but they left behind them an example of gallantry which, if other regiments had imitated, the result of the revolution would have been very different.

Monsieur Gouvion was forgotten when the struggle commenced; and mixing with the mob, passed on with the crowd, borne along by that affluence of the people, who were

hurrying to the Place de la Bourse ; some to escape from the soldiers, others to examine the new machine of which all men were speaking. Willingly would Monsieur Gouvion have avoided the terrible spectacle, but in that crowd all purpose or will was vain ; he arrived at the spot where the guillotine was still standing, too soon to be placed there *en permanence*. Around it, something resembling a *cordon* of men had been drawn up ; and the savages demanded a sou a head from those who wished to examine this horrible invention. Monsieur Gouvion saw that the pavement was stained with blood ; and as the rude crowd pushed him on, he was standing in the blood of his friend.

By a superhuman effort, he forced his way through into a street at the back of the Bourse. Then he remembered that, although he could no longer serve his friend, he could

have the satisfaction of fulfilling his dying request. He returned to the home he had left but a few hours since, when summoned to meet the living ; and then set off for Mont d'Or to perform the last wishes of the dead.

CHAPTER XII.

BLOIS.

THE road from Amboise to Blois winds, for the greater part of the way, by the river-side ; and to those who are in a frame of mind and health to enjoy such a drive, none can be more lovely. Carried along on the top of an embankment, which bears in its massive construction good evidence of the strong hands and stout hearts that planned and executed it, it has defied, since the days of Louis XIV., those inundations which swell this noble river. “ Cette rivière aussi orageuse que les passions qui l’entourent,” says

a writer, alluding to that time when all the fortresses upon its banks were monuments of chivalry and wild romance. No country can be more *riant* and joyous than this, and Florence would have enjoyed the journey, had not her solicitude about Madame Brinville, and her own sorrows so absorbed her heart, that she was quite incapable of feeling pleasure or of any exertion of mind. The only thing that touched and gratified her was the kindness and assiduity of Marie. And, indeed, it was well for all parties that Marie had accompanied them; for as distance separated her still further from home, she clung the more fondly to the friend by her side. They had started so late, and, owing to a long delay half-way, it was almost dark before they approached Blois, but as they proceeded towards the bridge, which they had to cross, a beautiful sight presented itself; the whole town appeared to be illuminated. Men carrying torches were hurrying along the

quays, and the light of those numerous torches was reflected in the rapid river. Florence started from the reverie into which she had fallen, even Madame Brinville languidly put her head out of the carriage to admire the scene. The outline of the old castle, its Gothic portal, its long, thick front, lofty towers, and interminable windows, were accurately delineated by lines of lamps. Not one building in the whole town appeared to be exempt from the penalty or the pleasure of illuminating; and it looked, climbing up the hill from the river's banks, like a city framed in gold, while at its feet the wide rolling torrent repeated all this splendour, and yet retaining nothing of it in the ever-varying bosom as it swept onward in its course. And so do many in life reflect merely the glory of others, and yet retain none of the light which has been shed upon them.

But the admiration which this strange and unexpected scene elicited was somewhat

diminished when, as the carriage approached the bridge, they observed a large party of armed men, who appeared to be guarding it, and by whom from time to time a loud shout was raised of "Vive la Nation!" Madame Brinville became very nervous. She had lately led so retired a life, that, even had she been quite well, such a commotion was calculated to occasion her great alarm; but this was heightened by her state of health, and the circumstance that at Amboise there were reports prevalent of bands of armed men, who had left Paris, bent on disorganizing the provinces. Her fear increased when, as they drew nearer the bridge, Marie perceived that the crowd, in place of diminishing, became denser; and she was on the point of desiring the postillion to turn back, and cross by a bridge some way down the river, when she found that it was too late. Two men came to the carriage door, and desired to see the passports,

which were all *en règle*, and the man was ordered to drive on, when some one in the road called out :

“ First make the good citizens shout out ‘ Vive la Nation ! ’ ” and the torches were put almost into the carriage to see that the orders were implicitly obeyed.

Madame became seriously alarmed, but she, as well as Florence and Marie, did as they were desired, when one of the horses, alarmed at the glare and the noise, began to kick and plunge violently. The postillion, almost as much afraid as the travellers inside, hit the horse over the head, but unfortunately the thong of the whip fell on the shoulders of one of the men who had been most prominent in occasioning this delay. The ruffian asked for no explanation, but in one instant raised up his flambeau, and struck the postillion on the head, who fell reeling from his horse.

The horses, now fairly beyond all control,

reared, plunged, and finally dashed onward. For a short time the crowd was so dense that the progress of the carriage was arrested, and one or two of the most active managed to seize the bridles ; but presently, alarmed, they let go their hold, and the horses flew at a terrible pace along the quay, and then turned the corner at the bridge.

Madame Brinville shrieked aloud, and Florence felt all the colour deserting her cheeks. Poor Marie was the only one who at all preserved her presence of mind. She placed Madame Brinville, who had fainted away, in such a position as she thought best calculated to resist the shock, whenever the carriage should stop ; and the horses flew as if they were maddened, while, far above the rolling of the wheels over the bridge, or the roar of the waters below it, was the roar of the multitude, the yells and imprecations which arose, as some of them were hurled down and seriously injured.

At last the carriage entered the small Place at the end of the bridge, near the street in which the hotel was situated. Here the crowd made way right and left in wild confusion, while the horses flew against a corner of the street which led to the old château, and lay foaming and kicking convulsively ; the carriage, thrown on one side, was broken in pieces, and Madame Brinville was tossed out on to the pavement. The very precautions, unhappily, which Marie had taken were the cause of Madame Brinville being the most severely injured, as she was thrown upon her head. Florence was only slightly hurt, and Marie escaped without any injury. In a moment the carriage was surrounded by a mob, infuriated by the consequences of the accident.

“ Here are the aristocrats ! ” they exclaimed. “ Ah ! what fine ladies to drive over the poor *canaille* with post-horses ! Soon

we shall not want blood-horses, but men of blood. Look at this little aristocrat on her knees," for Florence was kneeling down by her mother's side, and, although she could not at that moment understand the full force of the expressions used, she saw that the ruffians were preparing to touch that fainting, wounded form with their rude, uncouth hands.

"Oh, my mother!" she exclaimed, in agony, and threw herself by her side. "Spare her life, gentlemen, but take mine if you please."

She threw back her head in a paroxysm of a woman's strength, and of a woman's grief; her long hair floated over her shoulders, the rich colour glowing in her cheek, for excitement, and danger had brought back the tint which marked the hue of health, and the eyes pleaded for pity with an eloquent persuasion, which even those rude men could not witness unmoved.

“Diable, frère Molot,” said one of the men, “she is beautiful, and gentle too. After all, it was not the women who were to blame, but that *crétin* of a postillion. As for him, he is well served out; how he shrieked in the water when we threw him in! We played him a trick worth two of the other. He will never strike a citizen again; will he, frère Molot? So come along, my little girl; we will take care of the mamma. Come, my friends; we are not a set of savages; hats off in the presence of beauty.”

And strange was it to see these ruffians, touched by beauty, raising their hats. The fact is, that they were rather a set of mischievous children, with their passions for good or ill entirely beyond their control, and dependent on the caprice of the moment.

“Oh, gentlemen!” exclaimed Florence again, as they approached, “she is my mother. Take her gently to the hotel.”

They were all softened and subdued by Florence's appeal, and this short speech of their leader ; so they raised Madame Brinville, assisted by Marie and Florence, and bore her, as gently as a child could be borne, into the hotel. So sympathetic are the passions of the multitude—so magnetic is the power of youth and beauty, that even the rudest of the men were touched with pity as they passed along the streets. The hotel was situated in a narrow lane, with a small court in front, the gates of which had been closed when the tumult commenced ; but the energetic demands of the mob to have them opened did not admit of much delay. The old porter quickly drew away the bolts, and Madame Brinville was carried in, and placed on a bed in a room on the ground-floor.

“ Voyons donc,” said the same man, who seemed to command the others by the force of his will ; “ and, now Mademoiselle, you will tell your friends that true and honest

citizens, who call for good government, are not after all such monsters as they are described. And besides I tell you this, that if any one comes here to annoy you, you have only to ask where Loiret lives; and I will make him dance in the new fashion of the Bastille. Come, my friends, let us leave these ladies alone; but first one cheer for the nation, then salute beauty, my comrades, and away." So this wild, savage-looking set of ruffians followed their self-elected leader, like sheep following a shepherd.

Had Madame Brinville inquired into the state of the country, she never would have ventured on this route. Most of those towns where old feudal remains existed, and which had been associated therefore with the worst practices of that system, were peculiarly liable to disaffection. This was very remarkable throughout France during these sad and troubled times. But Blois was particularly so, for the people retained the liberal im-

pressions which had been transmitted to them from those days, when the States-General used to meet in that magnificent council-hall, which was at this time converted into a barrack-room. Moreover, if one château more than another had been the scene of dark tragedies, it was Blois ; and the people could not be ignorant of its historical interest, as it was the centre of attraction to every traveller in the neighbourhood. Here the Guises plotted treason black as the walls which concealed them, and here Henri III. hired the assassins of one of the most illustrious of the chivalry of France.

Standing in that gloomy château, which casts its shadow over the town, we seem to see him, the great Guise, the hero of the fatal day of the barricades, as he is described entering the great court of the castle, at the period of the meeting of the Etats de Blois, when the first and most dangerous of subjects

was to be received by the weakest and most profligate of sovereigns; around him is gathered in that noble hall, a princely array of knights, nobles, gallant gentlemen, and retainers; we seem to listen to the echo of that iron step as the duke strode proudly into the council chamber, the door of which was thrown open at his approach, with almost the same pomp and ceremony as for the monarch himself. There is the room where some of the gentlemen had daggers put into their hands by the king himself, which were to rid the sovereign of a deadly foe, by the basest and most cowardly of assassinations. Here is the old cabinet, where the tapestry still hangs neglected, behind which the conspirators were concealed. We can picture the glance, not of fear, for Henri le Balafré was incapable of fear; but the glance of suspicion and mistrust with which he must have advanced towards the royal presence, when he found

all his attendants had been stopped at the door of the council chamber, and he was desired to proceed alone ; the calm resolution with which he at once made up his mind to brave all consequences ; the timid voice of the murderer ; the boldness and demeanour of the victim ; and then the horrible tragedy that followed, when the fiery Duc de Guise fell, pierced by no less than forty wounds ; and here, as at Holyrood, the stains of blood are still shown to the traveller, and the spot where the body lay, with a cross of straw laid on its breast, as if the cross could consecrate the vile deed which has been transmitted as a tale of terror to all generations, and has peopled the château of Blois with superstitions. “Je ne le croyais pas aussi grand,” said the crowned assassin, as he spurned the body with his foot ; but though he did not believe in his greatness, history does, and she records the nobility of that house of

Guise, who, as is inscribed on the tomb of Le Balafre: "Tenaient conseil au seizième siècle;" and of its duke, the great commander of the armies of the League.

Then again, we gaze on the time-defaced, and superstitious pile, where Catherine de Medicis studied the stars, and those black arts which in the next century bestowed an infamous memory on Marguerite de Brinvilliers. "Uranix sacrum," is the motto over the door, and in that dress which the priestess of those mystic rites wore, did the mother of three sovereigns strive to read her destiny in the heavens. In an azure-coloured robe, covered with golden stars, she overlooked the fair scene which we now are gazing on with admiration, she, who then contemplated it as we do now, lies mouldering like her memory, while the splendour of this temple of superstition has departed, and left nothing but grass-grown

buttresses, and black, time-begrimed chambers, only inhabited by birds, ill-omened and foul, as the mysteries practised therein.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST FAREWELL.

THE town was still, the torches no longer illuminated the sky with their fitful and lurid glare, when Madame Brinville awoke from her long sleep ; the paleness of morning harmonized with the paleness of her cheek ; the troops were patrolling the streets in all directions, and the only sounds that rose on the stillness of that grey dawn, were the challenges of the numerous sentinels. Marie was silently assiduous in Madame Brinville's apartment ;

but Florence, quite overcome by fatigue and emotion, was asleep in an adjoining room.

“It is too late, it is too late,” Madame Brinville continued to mutter to herself, and then spoke the same words in a louder tone, as if she wished some one to hear them. Poor Marie did not understand to what the remark applied; and all that she could reply was, that it was still very early. Madame Brinville smiled faintly, like one whose heart is full of a mystery unexplained. “No, Marie,” she said, “I am not thinking of the morning, it is too late for us all—for our happiness—Marie, I am dying.”

“Dying !” exclaimed Marie, and the strange consciousness of the truth of Madame Brinville’s presentiment fell upon her. And then there followed the sense of the loneliness of Florence’s position—should she not wake her? She rose for the purpose of doing so, but a sign from Madame Brinville stopped her.

A light rain was falling, so light, that but for the stillness of the morning, the splash of the drops would scarcely have been heard on the pavement ; the branches of the few trees and shrubs in the court-yard looked desolate and sad, like the memories of our youth, when the sunshine which gilded it has faded away. Occasionally the tramp of the guard was heard in the street, and then it died away in the distance ; while the sound of some shutters opening and closing again, proved that this movement of troops aroused the curiosity of the inhabitants. Slowly as the light dawned, the objects in the room into which Madame Brinville had been borne, appeared more distinct. The comfortless floor, with the scrap of carpet near the bed, the chest of drawers, with two marble vases containing faded flowers ; a shabby, badly-gilded time-piece ticked the moments with a monotony, which, in the happiest frame of mind, was calculated to affect the nerves.

On the bed lay Madame Brinville very pale, with parched lips, and her hands clenched like one in much pain. She made a sign to Marie to draw near, and then motioned her to bend her head, so that she might whisper without the chance of being overheard by Florence, if she should awaken.

“Marie, I am sure that you love me,” said Madame Brinville.

“Why should I have come here, but for my affection for you and Florence,” replied poor Marie.

“True,” continued Madame Brinville, “and therefore I am sure you will do what I ask you, when I tell you that I wish to see a priest.”

“Oh, Madame,” and Marie clasped her hands and wept.

“Be calm, Marie,” said Madame Brinville, “for my sake, for all our sakes, be calm. I must tell you the truth, and that before Florence wakes. I am dying. Don’t inter-

rupt me," she continued, with a gesture of impatience, "I must see a priest, and the person in whom I have confidence, is the Abbé Louis."

"The Abbé Louis!" exclaimed Marie; "why he is at St. Meilleraye, which is two days' journey from hence. How are we to send for him, and will he come?"

"He would certainly come from any distance," was Madame Brinville's reply, "but he is not at St. Meilleraye. Here is a letter from him, which I received just before leaving Mont d'Or, in which he offers his service to me at any moment. He left St. Meilleraye some days since, on a visit to the Abbaye de Solesmes, near Sablé, which is not above eight hours from here, and not far off the road to Mont d'Or. But as it is a cross-road, the post would take many days going, while I have not many hours to live. What I ask you to do, Marie, is to see Madame Blanchard's brother, who is to

take charge of you back to Mont d'Or, and to ask him to accompany you a little out of his way. Call at the Convent de Solesmes, and pray the abbé to come here without a moment's delay. I ask you this, Marie, in the name of Florence."

"In your name, in your name, my dear Madame Brinville. I will see M. Hubert immediately, and I do not doubt he will do what I ask him. He lives in the Rue St. Pierre; and having seen him, I will order the carriage to be ready at the post-house, so as not to disturb Florence."

Madame Brinville clasped her hands in gratitude.

"But Florence, Florence!" exclaimed Marie, "what will she say when she find me gone? It will seem so unkind—not one farewell."

"I will explain all," whispered Madame Brinville; and poor Marie was compelled to

be satisfied with this slight consolation, and the consciousness of her rooted affection.

At this moment, Florence awoke; and Marie had only time to embrace Madame Brinville, and take a hurried farewell, before she entered. Florence looked ill and perfectly wretched. She detected, in one moment, the expression conveyed in her mother's countenance; and although she would not admit the thought to herself that there was danger, she felt quite convinced that all removal from Blois was out of the question.

The moment she was fully impressed with this thought, the young girl seemed to grow at once into resolution and womanhood. She sent a messenger for the best medical man in Blois, whose address she was provided with. She commanded her countenance, attended to her mother's every look; and none could tell what a load of secret misery was preying

at her heart. From that hour, she was strong in the sense of obligation. During Florence's earnest occupation near her mother, Marie slipped out. She took only a few clothes with her, and a purse which Madame Brinville had placed in her hands. The servant showed her the way to the Rue St. Pierre, where she found Monsieur Hubert.

He was an open-hearted, frank man, who, having heard an account of Marie's expedition from Mont d'Or, was quite prepared to start at any time. He was somewhat surprised when Marie explained that she wished to go round by Sablé; but when he saw that she was well provided with money, and learnt that he would have an agreeable journey in a post-carriage, no one could be more active in making all his preparations.

They met with no impediment in leaving the town, for it was still early; and all the excitement of the previous evening had entirely died away. A cold, damp rain fell, and the whole prospect looked so utterly wretched,

that once out of the town, it seemed to Marie as if she had been separated from all she knew and loved in the world. The dull, dreary tract of country which lies between Blois and Château Reynault was not materially improved when the carriage entered the forest which extends between Château Reynault and La Vallière.

Poor Marie little imagined, some months since, that she was to be taken from the quiet of her own home, and compelled to act in strange and new scenes, not only for herself, but for others. She had not time to collect her thoughts, but she grieved over the fate of Madame Brinville, and most regretted having left Blois without the opportunity of embracing Florence. Then some vague hope would arise to brighten the prospect; whether hopes or fears, she had full opportunity for indulging them, as her companion slept the whole way: he appeared to consider this expedition a capital occasion to make up all his previous watchings.

It was evening before they reached Sablé, the carriage having been delayed by the heavy state of the roads and the difficulty of obtaining horses in that thinly populated district. Sablé is a quiet, secluded, and picturesquely-seated town upon the Sarthe. There, as at Mont d'Or, situated some distance from the grand route of Paris, people cared little, and thought little, about revolutions and their consequences. The carriage stopped at the principal inn, and then Marie explained to her companion, as well as she could, her object in hiring a small light cart, and driving, on that evening, to Solesmes, which was only about two miles distant.

It was a beautiful evening—the rain had ceased, and the streaks of light on the horizon gave promise of a fine day on the morrow. The valley, unlike that of the Loire, was very narrow; and the ruins, which were numerous and scattered about the neighbouring heights, sometimes at any

sharp curve, appeared almost to touch from the opposite sides of the river, and glared at each other with all the pretension of feudal animosities. The road wound, for about a mile and a half, by the river-side; and at a sudden turn at the end of a glen, the towers of the Abbaye de Solesmes appeared. Like most of the abbeys, it was low seated in the peaceful valley, Religion having long deserted the mountain-tops where Paganism performed her rites: the feudal chief, in his pride and pretension, placed his castle, like an eyrie, on the rocky height; but the abbey, in its humble retreat, has survived the castle; and the soldiers of the cross, the vassals and retainers of the Baron.

Solesmes was a spot where men without a faith might well turn to seek one, and where men possessing a faith would desire to live and cherish it. So sheltered was it, that the winds of Heaven could never visit it too roughly; and the ivy, while it grew to the ancient edi-

fice, at once protected and enhanced its beauty. Erected in the fifteenth century, it had from its obscurity survived the ravages of the civil wars, that so long desolated France. Sometimes a noble, having less of the fear or love of the church before his eyes than his neighbours, used to claim the right of taking refuge within its walls, when the wassailing of his retainers may have disturbed the midnight vigils of the holy men; and many a criminal has fled to this spot for sanctuary, and knelt at that altar, from which love and mercy in the darkest times, and to the darkest hearts, is never absent. But on the whole the place was quite buried and little known but for those works which the clergy sent forth to the world—the productions of silence and repose.

As Marie drew near, the last streaks of sunset were reflected in the gorgeous mullioned windows. The silence was unbroken, until suddenly a loud bell was heard ringing for vespers; and then one or two of the monks might

be seen descending the surrounding heights by a narrow path, and as the carriage appeared, they turned and looked at it with surprise, marvelling what visitor could thus intrude on the monotony and stillness of the valley.

Marie drove up to the gate, and the driver rang the entrance bell, which reverberated through the cloisters. The lay brother appeared, and without making any remark conducted Marie to that room which in all convents is set apart for visitors, informing her that the Abbé Louis, who was attending vespers, would come to her at their conclusion. The room into which she was shown looked into a court opposite the chapel, and was hung with the portraits of the pious founders of the church, all of them in the attitudes of prayer and praise. From the window, Marie could see the forms of those who were engaged in the religious service; and the whole scene harmonized with the

evening gloom, which hung around the woods as the sun was disappearing.

It was not long before the abbé entered ; and it may be imagined, his surprise was great at seeing Marie there. He had from the first taken a deep interest in Madame Brinville, being fully assured there was a weight upon her heart, and that the malady from which she was suffering, was in its origin rather mental than physical. Although Blois was the last place he desired to visit, for he was too well acquainted with the bad character of that population, and their strong antipathy to the college which was founded there, still the sense of duty was paramount with him ; and he promised Marie that he would leave early the next morning, when he had made those preparations which were essential, in the event of anything happening to himself during a journey undertaken at such an unfavourable moment.

After many and most kind assurances on

the part of the Abbé Louis, who advised Marie to return to Mont d'Or without delay, and promised to communicate to her Madame Brinville's state, Marie left Solesmes. As she returned through the wood, its deep gloom seemed to fill her heart with mournful apprehensions ; the voice of prayer had comforted her awhile, but now sadness fell upon her ; and if there were glimpses of hope, they peeped through the soul's darkness like the twilight through the dark branches of those forest trees. Strange to reflect how much and how varied the impressions which one little heart can contain, and how that heart, concealed in the frame, is acted upon by outward and transient impressions.

“How beautiful,” she thought, as the moon rose, and the light of many stars trembled like the ripples of the river in which they were reflected, “how beautiful would all this seem to me under happier circumstances. If there were but present to

me the sense of being beloved by some one, the memory of this spot, which will now fill my heart with sad remembrances, would then be recalled with pleasure, and peopled with affections. And yet, does it not appear that in all things there are two antagonistic principles, the lights and shadows of life, and that these, like Ormusd and Ahriman, the power of good and the power of evil, are ever present to us; thus to all material objects do two classes of associations belong. See a river like this on a warm summer's eve so gay and bright—a joyous bark upon it with love and youth aboard, and the young lives sparkling like the ripples over which they are gliding—what a sweet repose steals over the heart as the boat glides gently on; when not a sound is heard but happy whispers, and the light spray as it falls from the idle oar! and yet it may be that very evening, the boat floats by a solitary man, to whom the river suggests no happy

and gentle thoughts, let it flow ever so brightly. He gazes on the waters, and ponders on the eternal ocean, towards which they are flowing, bearing on their bosom those gay, giddy, trifling idlers; he thinks not so much of the ripples with which the moonbeams are dallying, as on the deep pools that lie beneath the steep banks, and sees the dark shadow which the bending branches cast upon it. All about that river is dark, fearful, and mysterious to him."

" The river is green and runneth low,
Ye cannot tell what it saith,
It keepeth its secrets down below,
And so does death."*

So all objects possess a twofold significance: one for prosperity, one for adversity—one for the joyous, one for the gloomy; how, shallow, therefore, is the observation which attributes certain effects as incidental to par-

* Faber.

ticular objects or circumstances—that makes men marvel that others do not feel as they do in presence of similar events or gazing on the same scene.

Arrived at Sablé, Marie passed a sleepless night of agitation. Every arrangement was made with this new relation for her departure the next morning for Mont d'Or. He would not hear of any delay, although she wished to remain until the abbé had passed through ; but Monsieur Hubert insisted that it was absolutely essential for him to be back at Blois some time during the following morning.

The abbé strictly fulfilled his promise ; he passed through Sablé a very short time after Marie and her companion had left ; nor was he long on the road to Blois ; that afternoon he entered the town, and drove to the street in which the hotel was situated without exciting much attention.

As he passed the threshold of the door

the person who stepped forth to welcome him was Florence.

Had she grown taller in the short space of time that had elapsed since he had seen her at Mont d'Or? What was it gave that almost stern expression to her brow? The hair was thrown off that beautiful forehead; the cheek was thin and pale, more so even than usual, and there was an expression of awe on her lip, like one who was, or who had been very recently standing in the presence of majesty, and of sorrow, as when that majesty is the majesty of death; the will, for the moment, had conquered all weakness—if deep affection can ever be designated by such a name—for the moment the sense of duty and the necessity of exertion and self-command gave her a power, which no one ever could have believed her to possess. The Abbé Louis followed her along a narrow passage into her own room, which opened into Madame

Brinville's, and then with a choking sensation of the throat, which all repressed grief gives, she whispered in an agonized voice: "There is no hope, M. l'Abbé—no hope." She could proceed no further; but after a long pause, she added: "She wishes to see you without delay."

The abbé bent his head to collect his thoughts, before entering the chamber of death. He did not breathe words of comfort and hope. It is not when the heart is so wrung that they are ever acceptable.

He remained some minutes in silent prayer, and then, after laying his hands on Florence's head, and murmuring a low blessing, he stole quietly into the room. The windows were darkened to shut out the light of day, but a small lamp was burning in the grate. A woman, who had been engaged to attend on Madame Brinville, was sitting by the bed-side. She whispered something to the dying woman when the abbé entered,

who turned her head as with great pain, although a happy smile played on her features when she saw the abbé. One hand was thrown idly on the bed, the other grasped a sheet of a newspaper.

The room had that gloomy, cheerless appearance which sickness wears ; the boxes, half unpacked, lay in confusion on the floor ; for, although Florence wished to have exerted herself in putting some things to rights, her mother could not bear the least noise ; and yet Florence had silently managed to give to the table some appearance of taste and refinement, for women of taste refine everything they touch. A few flowers, which the doctor now permitted, were placed in the cracked vases, and some ornaments much cared for by Madame Brinville lay on the table, each of these ornaments possessing an interest and an association of which Florence was ignorant ; and, alas ! Florence was not aware that the flowers were

allowed that morning, because the doctor knew that the case was quite hopeless ; it was only placing flowers before the dying instead of on the tomb. How could this sad and sudden change for the worse have taken place ? What was the cause of this shock ?

“ Abbé,” whispered the poor woman, “ it is happiness for me to see you. I feared that you would be too late. I have much to tell you—much to say.”

She then beckoned to Florence, and asked her to leave her alone for a few minutes.

The abbé took the cross, which was hung round his neck by a chain, and placed it to her lips. She held it there with one hand, and with the other, pointed to a paragraph in that newspaper which she held in her hand.

It was headed “ Vive la Nation,” and contained a most incorrect account of the

whole of the transactions which terminated in the deaths of MM. Foullon and Langeac. The detail of the attack on M. Langeac's hotel in the Rue St. Dominique was very circumstantial, but full of all those exaggerated statements of the valour and probity of the people, calculated to flatter and mislead the nation. It also mentioned that it was supposed some papers of great importance had been removed by a M. Gouvion, in the disguise of a workman—a piece of information which had been obtained through the rascality of one of the servants, who was anxious to ingratiate himself with the popular party; but however incorrect and inflated the general tenour of the description was, one thing was certain—that MM. Foullon and Langeac had fallen victims to the popular frenzy.

The abbé read the account quite through, and then laid the paper on the bed, saying:

“All suffering for men, as for nations, is sent by God, Madame.”

“Yes,” said Madame Brinville, in a voice which was choked by sobs and tears; “yes, you do not know what I mean—how should you?” and she clasped his arm convulsively with a strain that made him start. Raising her head, she seemed to cast all the light of her eyes through his own, so intently were they fixed upon him. “You don’t know the truth, abbé. This Monsieur Langeac, whom the wretches murdered so foully, is my husband!” and then she gave a shriek which called Florence into the room.

Madame Brinville rose up in her bed, and waved her arm with an imperious gesture; and then she continued her conversation with the abbé in a voice which might have been heard almost all over the house. She was delirious.

“No, no, abbé, it is false—it is not true. He was not my husband, although at one

time I thought in truth he was. He acted a part—he cruelly deceived me. He took me to the altar—he plighted his faith, that false friend Elise ever by my side, and when my child is born, he tells me he is married to another—so my child is an outcast. Let her wander—let her wander forth, pale and alone—in the wide world alone. Mocking eyes flash upon her—mocking lips bid her no welcome—but do not blame me, Florence. A father dead—a mother dying—sit by me in the garden, Alfred—take my hand in yours—the soft hills and silent stars bless our loves—sleep gladly, gentle heart, soothed by the voice of affection—and deeper joys succeeding, Alfred—baby lips touch mine own—she shall be called Florence, for I read that Florence, which sits by the bright Arno, is called the Beautiful. If the world neglect this child—Love shall bless her. Now I am dying, in some green valley bury me. The wild life, the fierce excite-

ment of that young world—am I glad to leave it? Oh! Alfred, meet me again—as before, call me your wife—press me to your heart, that the words of vengeance shall not rise to my lips—can I dry my tears for your sake? No. Pride will mourn—passion will denounce, and a still, small voice shall speak from the grave, and the winds shall bear it to thine ear. Come to my arms, sweet, indulgent little Florence. Peace and love are no more for me; God grant them to you. Give me back the sweet hopes of my youth, the green fields, the chapel, the aisle in which I knelt, the whispers of mercy I heard, and the counsel I listened to in vain, the parents I left in their old age. Florence, mine own Florence,” and she threw her arms wildly round her child’s neck, for Florence had crept in unseen, when she heard her own name mentioned, and as she knelt by the bedside, she whispered:

“Let me die with thee, if I may not die for thee, oh ! my mother.”

“Did Florence speak ?” continued the poor woman. “Oh ! my darling child, I would watch and pray for you. Forgive me, Florence. The error was not mine, but mine the punishment ; I was pure like yourself, Florence, when I left my home and followed the dictates of a wild and wayward heart ; and yet you know not how many tears I have shed, how I have loved you.”

“Oh, my mother ! I love you more than ever. I always felt that there was some secret between us. Now it is revealed, and I love you more in this hour of trouble and sorrow than I ever did in the hours of joy and pleasure.”

In a moment, a ray, as it were, of light seemed to flash across the dying woman’s countenance.

“Take my hand, Florence,” she said. “I

cannot see clearly. You will love Mont d'Or, in memory of the past."

"Yes," murmured Florence, and even at that solemn moment she thought of Henri.

"And you will pray for me, in that chapel which overlooks the valley, where I have sat during long nights, and prayed for the morrow's dawn; and, abbé, you too will offer up prayers for one unworthy, but penitent? Florence, you have heard all, you know all. And you still love me! Happier than my parents, who did not survive the shock when they learned how cruelly I had been deceived, I die in the arms of my child; Florence, you forgive me the wrong done you."

Florence threw herself upon her mother's heart, and again, as in childhood, she reclined upon her bosom. All delirium had passed, and a sweet repose fell on the dying woman's features, as she pressed her child

in her arms. Love, mercy, and peace were in that long embrace expressed, and it was not until the pressure of the arm was gently relaxed, and it fell languidly by her side, that Florence looked upon her mother's countenance, and saw that for her the world had closed for ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

YOUTH AND AGE.

THE morning after Madame Brinville's departure, Henri received Marie's note, informing him of the unexpected event; he was so taken by surprise, that for some time he found it difficult to realize its truth. All mental as well as physical shocks are deadened by their severity; but to do him justice, Henri not only felt the departure of Florence, but he was deeply grieved to observe in the tone of Marie's

note, that there was every reason to dread an unfavourable termination of a journey undertaken by Madame Brinville in such a state of excitement, and with so little preparation ; but above all, there was something mysterious in this departure, and at any time, unknown or undefined ills are much more difficult to bear up against than even greater evils, the extent of which has been fully ascertained.

Henri's first idea was to see the marquis, to tell him how much he was attached to Florence, and to entreat him to receive her as his daughter, if he were so fortunate as to obtain her consent. He finally determined on this step, but it was not without great doubt and mistrust of its success that he put it into execution. Two passions, he feared, were to be opposed to each other—the affection of youth and the ambition of old age.

There was, however, one advantage which

Henri possessed of which he was not fully aware. No one prized beauty, or gazed with more delight on the graces of youth than the courtly gentleman of the old school. The marquis was one of that school, and an excellent specimen. To him female beauty was something more than a mere picture—to charm by its light and its freshness—it recalled to him the times when, one of a circle of brilliant cavaliers, he broke hearts with as much grace as his ancestors broke lances. He regarded beauty in a woman as a religion—as the type of a faith; it was the old creed—the old style worn out in these days—a remnant of that beautiful superstition which made the attributes of a woman essential to the success of an enterprise, and which associated the proudest triumphs with female influence; so may it ever be with age, if the light no longer burns on the altar where the old have worshipped—if the flowers that decorated it in their youth are now withered—if a dark

curtain has fallen over the picture before which they knelt, still let them feel for the affections of others in memory of their own. Again bid the young confiding hearts bring their incense, their spring-blossoms, their offerings to the altar; let age brush away their faded remembrances if they will, but not cast shadows on the young existences around them—tell them not that the fuller blown, the sooner must the roses fade; and if they cannot any longer kneel with them at the same shrine, still let them strew the rushes as on festal days between the porch and the altar; offering up a prayer for the happiness of others standing silently apart.

In the marquis's character, moreover, there was not only a natural kindness and chivalry of soul, but moreover that simplicity which unites the two childhoods together, and which unfrequently makes old age the most agreeable associate of youth. Middle age is too frequently to the young what the *bourgeoisie* is to the aristocratic classes—the

jealous rival, full of vain regrets for the unattainable ; but old age represents rather the feelings of the poorer classes—always more indulgent, of kindlier instincts, further separated from objects of desire, these cease to become objects of jealousy. It may be added that for some time past the marquis had missed Florence very much, for she used to take his arm from time to time, and saunter with him on the terrace ; and it was a pleasing sight to view her graceful form, as she bent down to aid the faltering steps of the once proud and stalwart man.

On this morning, therefore, it was not without a feeling of deep regret, that the marquis heard from Henri of Madame Brinville's departure ; and when Henri, carried away by his own feelings and the sympathy which his father evinced, poured forth all that tale of love and affection which youth has so frequently repeated, and will for ever renew, the smile that broke on the marquis's

face gave him good confidence that his enthusiasm was not thrown away ; in fact, the marquis was not unprepared for the reception of this love story ; he too lately had felt very lonely, all his old friends had departed. The abbé, M. de Levet, and even Madame la Comtesse, left regrets behind them ; he thought how agreeable it would be to have a young, graceful daughter to enlighten his home. After all, he reflected, and with much good sense, that this was not a favourable moment for him to cling to the prejudices of former society, while the unknown future was shrouded in clouds of darkness ; and yet as he thought in this strain, walking along the terrace, he would turn to the noble pile with a feeling of conscious pride. All the wide lands, which extended from the forest to the Loire, proclaimed him seigneur. The day had been, he thought, when the heir to that estate might have claimed the hand of the most princely of the

blood of France ; he might have associated with the vast possessions of De Soligny, the noble graces of La Trémouille, or the glories of the last of the Montmorencis ; and here a simple girl, of humble or even of unknown lineage, had evidently won the affections of his son. It was a sad blow to the pride of ancestry—a gloomy awakening to the busy dreams of an old man's ambition.

After Henri had finished, the marquis continued to pace the terrace for some time in deep thought. At last he turned, and said :

“ Henri, I am not at all surprised at what you tell me of your affection for Florence for even my old blood warms when I look, on so much beauty, and such winning, graceful ways ; but let us view the matter reasonably, Henri. We must not forget that we know nothing of her family. After all, who is Madame Brinville ? I have

asked, and can gain no very satisfactory reply. She was the daughter of a very respectable family, who resided here, and married in Paris. Here is the extent of our information. Now, supposing I were willing to waive all my views of worldly greatness for your wishes, Henri, you yourself would not desire to unite yourself to any young lady, however charming in every respect, without knowing something more of her than you do of Mademoiselle Florence."

"One so beautiful must be most worthy," answered Henri, in the true spirit of a young poet.

"Ah," said the marquis with a sigh and a smile; "this is all very well; but I know," and certain passages of his life seemed to flit across his mind, "this is not always the case. I agree with you, however, that in this instance we have no cause to question Madame Brinville's position, but do you know, I think, at the same time, that our

feelings are widely influenced by her charms. For instance, had both these ladies been plain and disagreeable—do you think, Henri, that you and I would have taken so favourable a view of their position?” And the old man laughed at the difficulty in which his shrewdness placed Henri.

But Henri, however, was too much in love to admit anything that could tell to his disadvantage.

“Well,” said the marquis after another and still longer pause, during which he seemed to be particularly occupied in making hieroglyphics in the gravel, with the end of his stick. “I will say this, Henri, that if, on inquiry, Madame Brinville turns out to be, as I do not for one moment doubt but she is, of honourable position and honourable conduct—I say I do not doubt it,” and here he raised his hat as if in homage to her merit, “and if this is satisfactorily ascertained, I will waive all my prejudices as you would

call them, my sentiments as I designate them, and will consent to receive Mademoiselle Florence as my daughter."

Henri, as might have been expected, was unbounded in his protestations of gratitude and affection.

"But then," asked the marquis, "how do you propose to gain information on this point?"

When did a lover ever hear of difficulties? now that Henri had received his father's consent, everything seemed so easy. All hail to the ardour of youth, that believes all it wishes, and knows no obstacles; in the happiness of the moment, joyous visions dawned on Henri, golden robed and wreathed in flowers. Little did he think, as he bowed down to worship in his heart, that she whom his imagination loved to picture, would shortly be gazing on the stern features of death, that while to him life seemed to be opening in all the glory

of love, the grave was closing on another. In the note which Marie had written to Henri, she explained to him that she should return in two or three days. He determined to await her arrival, and he did so patiently until the day following his conversation with the marquis, and then he could no longer control his anxiety, more especially as he had learned from Madame Blanchard, to whom Marie had written, that Madame Brinville was detained at Amboise by her severe illness. So he started off, full of hope and excitement, for action is ever the best cure for anxiety of mind; and as the carriage rattled along the avenue on the road to Amboise, and he left the tall line of poplars, which skirt the road, behind him, in the far distance, he felt that every step was bringing him nearer to happiness.

CHAPTER XV.

TWILIGHT.

WHO can realize death to themselves? Surely it is most difficult—amid the glory, the pomp, and the circumstance of life, surrounded by what men call its realities—that we can bring it distinctly home to our hearts. We may pass day by day through the shades of the cloisters, the shadows of the tombstones may slant across our path, we may read, as the topic of the hour, that names well known or much-loved, which had their place in our minds or in our hearts,

have passed away ; we may assent to the undeniable, indisputable fact that every street we drive through has its house of mourning, and that amid all dances, the dance of death alone never tires ; but who can realize all this ? The companion, the old familiar friend may lie in some foreign land, but who can bring it home to his heart that he shall see him no more ? And perhaps it is well it should be so. If we could realize the truth that every announcement of a death which we read of signifies tears of bitter anguish for many a heart, and that all this will one day be felt for us—life would indeed be hard and painful to bear.

So felt poor Florence as she knelt by the body of her mother, with whose tenderness and affection her own past life had been entirely associated. Was it possible that she who had but now pressed her to her heart had really passed away for ever from this world ?—that the form she had so fondly

cherished was now an object to inspire feelings of awe and terror? The shutters had been closed, but here and there a ray of light struggling through the crevices played on the pallid features of the dead. The voice of the abbé praying in the next room, in which he had fitted up a temporary altar, sounded like a solemn and melancholy dirge.

Florence would not be comforted. Her first thought was love and sorrow for her who was lying there, but deepening in shadow like the dark clouds in the darkness of night was her sense of utter loneliness; and the poor child now, for the first time in her life, began to feel that she was without a friend. She had overheard all that her mother said; and although she did not understand why one so pure and good should have so bitterly regretted the past, she felt that some great wrong had been done her mother and herself, and that henceforth the course of her life was beset with difficulties which she had never contemplated.

And then another idea crossed her mind, she was unworthy, and of whom? If previously, a sense of inferiority had crept across her in her intercourse with Henri, what was it now? If before, a gulf had been placed between them, that gulf now, indeed, appeared to be fathomless; and then she remembered that she had promised her mother to return to Mont d'Or.

“Surely,” she thought, “this is impossible. A promise so hastily made, can I fulfil it?”

The remembrances and sweet memories of the past, all associated with Mont d'Or, swept across her brain, and she seemed to pass from the chamber of death to pleasant and happy scenes: to the day when, full of hope, and fresh as the spring, she had sat by the fountain; the repose, the confidence, the devotion of love ever present to her. Again she seemed to hear that voice, and to see that countenance so gentle and loving; and then

a shudder and a trembling fell over her. The door opened, and the light fell on the ghastly features of death. The Abbé Louis entered. Silently he took her by the hand, and led her into the other room, where the lights on the temporary altar were burning. They knelt down together, and when her mind was a little more composed, he wrote on a piece of paper, for he could not trust himself to speak :

“Take no thought for any arrangements ; these I will make. I will remain until to-morrow evening, to pay the last offices to your poor mother.”

Florence only bowed her head in silence, and folded her arms over her bosom, like a Magdalen in a picture.

The night came on apace. She thought that her heart would be freer and nearer to Heaven if she went into the open air. The abbé proposed to remain—he was about to say, with her mother, but corrected himself ;

so she left the sad house, alone and desolate. It was a fine, mild evening, and as she walked up the steps towards the cathedral, a beautiful and extensive prospect expanded before her. She reached the terrace of the Gardens of the Evêché, whence the view extends to the stately Chambord, and even to the towers of that Amboise, where she had still fondly hoped that happy days were in store for her ; the turrets and gables of the Château of Blois, the broken outline of roof and spire of the town might be traced in purple outline against the red streaks which the setting sun, in memory of its glory, cast around ; the evening bells of the cathedral were tolling, and the melancholy sound seemed to be borne upon the bosom of the waters far into the distant forest. All this harmonized with her frame of mind. There is a companionship in perfect solitude, when the heart is desolate.

And then returned the sense of darkness and apathy which, successfully on some oc-

casions, deadens the innate sense of suffering, and she mechanically counted the boats, whose black lines were reflected in the rolling river. She fell into a reverie, and seemed to marvel what lands there were beyond those distant mountains; were they as bright and sunny as poets described? were the oceans as vast, and did new worlds exist glorious as she had seen them painted? And then her thoughts turned to galleries which as a child she had visited, and first among the pictures which rose to her memory, was the "Lazarus" of Sebastian del Piombo, a picture ghastly and terrible, with transparent features, paler than the cloth that bound the head, or the grave-clothes which seemed damp from the earth in which they had lain. There were the long, lank hands holding up the tombstone, the hollow cheek, the cold, terrible eye; and then she thought of the death-bed she had left, and the poor child fell on her knees in a flood of grief and anguish.

How long she remained in that attitude—for it seemed like a trance—she knew not. She thought, after a time, she heard a footstep which did not turn as it approached her ; it drew nearer and nearer ; but her mind heard it not.

“ Oh, my God !” she exclaimed, “ is there no hope ?” and a low voice which thrilled through every vein, whispered in her ear :

“ Florence, God is good ; there is hope.”

She arose from her knees, and looked wildly round her, as though it had been a dream, and then placed her hand to her head. It seemed as if her mind was wandering.

“ Florence ! beloved Florence ! I have been to the inn ; I know all. No one feels for you more deeply than I do. Florence, in this world you will never be alone, for I love you.”

“ Oh, spare me !” she exclaimed.

“ Florence ! my own Florence ! I sympathize with all your sorrow. You loved your mother, and not with that cold worldly love,

when the features are only venerated and respected in the bust that records them. Your love was not of this nature ; you loved her as only one with your heart can love. But there is hope—hope for her, for she was pure as she was beautiful ; hope for you, for Heaven loves the truthful and excellent.”

“ Oh, spare me ! ”

“ No, no ; let me speak to you, Florence, in language with which my heart is overflowing. You remember when first we met ; I can recal every word spoken on that day ; how your gentle spirit stole over me, and I murmured : ‘ Blessed is the mother who bore thee so beautiful.’ They say that no love can be greater than a mother’s for a child, and I too thought this until I saw you.”

“ Henri, for mercy’s sake ! for the love of God ! ”

“ Why do you adjure me, Florence, thus ? Is love not a holy thing ? is it not the greatest proof of faith that the moment when we love most, is that in which we feel most pure, most

holy? To die with the being we love, is it not the first desire of the heart? and does this not prove the existence of Eternity? I would now, Florence, pour forth my life at your feet, and die with you, rather than live without you."

"Henri, I tell you solemnly, it is impossible."

"Call me Henri again, let me hear my name from your lips, Florence; letters cut in the bark of young trees grow with their growth, and so is my love engraven in my heart and grows with it. Hear me, Florence, I never would have said all this—indeed, I have said too much—but I overheard your expressions of loneliness and desolation; sure, I am too, that every word I now utter would be grateful to one who is no more."

"Henri, this scene to-night is not so inappropriate as you imagine; there is a death besides the death of the body, the death of the heart. I too have something to tell you—your father—"

“ Oh !” interrupted Henri, “ my father,” and an expression as of joy burst from his lips, in strange contrast to the melancholy nature of the scene, “ my father, Florence, he loves you ; I have asked him. He has lost all those vain notions of position which at one time influenced him. ‘ Henri,’ he said to me, ‘ all I ask is, that my daughter be of virtuous parents, and pure and graceful as Florence is.’ ”

“ Oh, misery !”

“ What does this mean, Florence ? You love me—I know it ; for in such a moment as this, all the false framework of an artificial society breaks in pieces, and soul stands in the presence of soul. Well, then, my father consents that I should love you, and you reply in a tone of agony when I speak of hope. Can the tomb be so insatiable as to claim all feelings and affections, and leave no hope beyond ? I have gazed on sculptured monuments, beautiful as the faith to which they were consecrated, angel faces bending

over the tomb, with countenances of love and mercy. Surely, then, you will not say that all that is young and beautiful is to be buried in one tomb?"

"Henri," said Florence, "you pain me more than I can express. You may well believe the causes must be of a most solemn nature, which could lead me, in the presence as it were of my mother's grave, to speak to you as I now do, but the heart will gush forth. Henri, we must now part; you see me lonely and miserable, I claim your sympathy, and no more."

"It is well; you do not love me, then?"

"Henri!" and she looked towards him with a noble countenance, such as the true-hearted alone wear.

"Oh! thank you for that look, Florence; I am happy, I have confidence! We are one I feel in sorrow or in joy. But why turn from me, Florence? why withdraw your hand from mine—why?"

"Henri, have I not an excuse for much

sorrow, and for other thoughts?" and her voice sounded like a reproach.

"Too true, too true," murmured Henri.

There was a pause, and real life burst upon them: the outline of the town, as the pale moon rose behind it; the shouts of the boatmen on the river sounded faintly in the distance; and they could even hear the roar of the arrowy Loire, as it rushed beneath the narrow arches of the bridge.

Florence raised her head, as though to recal the circumstance of her being there, and drew her cloak around her. And then the twofold thought crossed her, first that she had been long absent, then that no mother was waiting for her; and she wept anew.

"Henri!" she said at last, with a violent effort, "I pray you one thing—I pray you to forget me. I may love you—I may cherish your memory; but I never can accept your love in return."

"What is this mystery?"

The fair girl bent her head down, and the

flush of her cheek might be seen through the darkness of the night, as she whispered :

“ I am unworthy of you.”

“ Of me ?” exclaimed Henri.

“ Of any one,” was her reply.

“ You unworthy, Florence ! Oh ! you little know the heart of my father, if you imagine this. I wish you had listened even to him speaking as he did of the prejudices of an antiquated society to be broken through. Florence ! you do not know what you say.”

“ Listen to me again, Henri,” and her voice sounded full of inward strength and conviction : “ You say you love me. Well, ask me not to explain the words I utter : I tell you, Henri, with an earnestness which only true affection could dictate, that you must not love me ; or if you do so, love me for my poor mother’s sake, and as a sister.”

He saw that it was useless to ask for any explanation at such a moment. The vision of her mother was so vividly impressed on her mind, that her only idea now was to

return to her temporary home. It seemed to her, when she had time to concentrate her mind, that there was a kind of sacrilege in thinking of any one or feeling for any one except her mother; and yet there was a sense of sacrifice and duty associated with this painful conversation, not unmeet for the occasion. Henri could not comprehend the mystery which seemed to be implied in all Florence's answers. He attributed something of this mood to the excitement of the moment; but when she drew her cloak tightly around her, and with a rapid pace descended the steps which led from the Place d'Evêché to the inn, he crept silently to her side. She paused one moment before ringing at the gate, and gave him her hand.

Monsieur de Soligny, you say that you love me, and I believe you. Nay, more, I believe that you are most high-minded and honourable. I am a poor lonely girl, and have no one to protect me. I have only one prayer to make—do not return here again. You

ask me the cause of this ; I cannot tell you :
the secrets of the dead are sacred. But
from this moment we part to meet no
more."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TOCSIN.

FLORENCE hurried through the courtyard to the room where the small chapel had been fitted up, and thence, after having knelt at the altar, she passed into the chamber of death. Her mother lay there with her arms crossed, as though in prayer. The stillness was quite solemn. For the moment, it seemed to Florence that she was still breathing; the fearful sense of death had not yet dawned upon her in all its intensity. As she sat down by the window, and looked upon the court, she observed for the first

time, by the light of the lamp which hung over the entrance gate, that the abbé was in conversation with an officer, who was attended by a gendarme ; they were speaking in a low and confidential voice, and the abbé now and then pointed to the cross suspended round his neck, while he gave an authoritative and impatient stamp on the pavement. The last words uttered by the officer were : “ Well, we will return,” and they stalked out of the court, with their swords rattling on the pavement. When the abbé entered, he beckoned Florence into the other room. Did he forget that no conversation can disturb the dead ?

“ Be calm, my dear Mademoiselle Florence,” said Abbé Louis, for the subject on which he was about to speak to her flashed across her mind ; “ be calm,” said he. “ You know that I would not intrude upon your grief ; but circumstances have arisen here, that renders it absolutely essential I should speak to you on one subject—that, is the funeral.”

Florence buried her face in her hands.

The abbé proceeded rapidly, like a man most anxious to get rid of a distressing subject :

“ Mademoiselle, the prefect has been here, and it was decided that the funeral was to take place about two o’clock to-morrow ; but since then he has sent the commandant to suggest that it is most desirable it should be postponed until the evening. It so happens that the people propose to make a demonstration to-morrow (poor, ignorant fanatics !) to celebrate the destruction of the Bastille. This ceremony is to commence at twelve o’clock, and will not be over until five. They are going to place some *immortelles* on the graves of two young men of Blois, who chanced to perish at that attack. The authorities, therefore, wish the funeral postponed until the evening, for they dread the possibility of a collision.”

The abbé did not tell the whole truth, that the prefect had strongly insisted on the fact

that there existed at Blois a strong feeling against the clergy. At Tours, on the previous day, the palace of the archbishop had been attacked, and he had narrowly escaped with his life. For some time past, the clergy of Blois had been insulted in the discharge of their duty. The convents of Solesmes and La Meilleraye had in a peculiar degree excited the hatred of these demagogues ; in the first place, because the direction of these institutions was so powerful, that they dreaded it ; and secondly, that some renegade priests had conveyed popular, though most ill-founded notions of these establishments. The Abbé Louis himself was well known throughout the district as a man of high principles and undaunted courage, and as such was very likely to incur the popular antipathies. The authorities were so well aware of this circumstance, that when they learned of his arrival in Blois, they were most anxious that he should return to Solesmes, and permit Madame Brinville to have the last rites paid

to her by the clergy of the town; but having once promised to attend her to her last long home, no power or argument could make him swerve from what he considered his duty.

It was, therefore, arranged that the next evening at six the sad ceremony was to take place. The cathedral was so near, that there was every hope it would under any circumstances attract little or no attention. Florence was resolved to attend it, and then—

Ay, and then what was this poor Auswanderer to do, without one friend in the world? where was she to turn to? Marie had returned home; Mont d'Or was the only spot that presented itself to her, that old homestead which her mother had purchased. there she would be near Madame Blanchard; and, moreover, the abbé had promised her mother to see her safely through the journey back. But then arose the picture of Henri. How could she live in the same neighbourhood? She had rejected him, and rightly so; he would

accuse her of the worst caprice ; but could she tell the cause ? could she explain the past ?

And then, without arriving at any conclusion, she had recourse—first and last resource of the wretched—to prayer ; and kneeling by the bed-side of her mother, peace and confidence stole over her heart ; it was then a happiness to feel that there was a grave in this world, and a world beyond the grave.

The next morning dawned clear and beautiful, the sun rose in all its splendour, over plain, forest, tower, steeple, it cast its glory : and light broke on the hearts, even of the most sorrowful. Not, however, where one was lying in the arms of death. Here the light seemed to be a mockery of woe, and hearts full of gloom prayed for darkness to shroud them. Within the inn, every preparation was making for the last offices of the dead. In vain did the abbé endeavour to conceal from Florence all the melanchol detail which renews in the heart the shock

which the event itself has caused : the matter-of-fact observations of those who only find in death the means of their subsistence, and reap a fortune from the memorials of affection. Who that has suffered from a sad bereavement but must have felt stunned by the dull indifference of those to whom death is a day's good hire? and if some claim for sympathy is suggested by the tears of sorrow, the formal, cold expression is even more painful than indifference itself ; for the heart seems, like Rachel, to plead to be left alone with its sorrow, for it will not be comforted. True sympathy is silent, unaffected, and therefore impressive, it pervades the being like the gentle breath of spring, and like it, warm and genial, calls into existence the blossoms of affection.

The men who attended on this sad occasion, were more than usually rude and savage, not even the presence of Florence prevented them from making cold and brutal remarks ; once (fortunately when she was out of the room)

the abbé was quite shocked to see one of the men, having measured the coffin, and then the body, shrug his shoulders. The other quite understood him, and said : “ Com-
bien ? ” The first held up one finger. “ Bah,” said his comrade, “ mais parlez donc, femme morte n’entend pas.”

“ Hurrah ! hurrah ! ” they both shouted, when the sounds of drums and the shouts of the mob were heard in the street, and broke on the awful scene of death.

“ Here,” said one, “ is the good time come to the people at last. Is it not so, abbé ? No more grinding us down by the aristocracy and the Church. Vive la Liberté ! A bas la Bastille ! ” and he rushed to the door with his hammer in his hand.

The crowd recognized him as one of their most cold-blooded leaders in any atrocious business. “ Ah ! voilà M. Sanson ! Vive M. Sanson ! Vive la Liberté ! A bas la Bastille ! ”

He returned into the chamber of death,

his eyes inflamed, and vehemently shouting and outraging the feelings of her who was so buried in sorrow.

“Miserable,” said the abbé, “have you no fear to die?”

The scoundrel was awed for one moment by the stern presence of the abbé; his commanding features lit up by the magnetic power which truth and virtue give; but the impression was momentary, the word echoed in the ruffian’s brain.

“Miserable!” he repeated, “call M. Sanson miserable? Ah, coquin de prêtre! the time will come soon; you will see the end of it; les sans culottes feront danser les apôtres. And, my little abbé, you will cry ‘Vive la Liberté!’ before you die, unless I knock you on the head at once,” and he held the hammer over him in a menacing attitude.

Florence clung to the abbé in a paroxysm of alarm. He, however, never moved a muscle of his countenance, but calm, firm, and collected, he led her into the other room.

Then he shut the door, while the wretches in the adjoining room went on with their preparations, making as much noise as they possibly could, singing snatches of ribald songs, and indulging in every insult that savage brutality could suggest.

The evening came on apace, the men, their sad task performed, left the house, and the hours sped on in mournful expectation, until the clergy, who were to assist at the ceremony, arrived. The cathedral bell then began to toll. Florence placed a cross of flowers which she had woven, on the coffin; the candles were lit, and the bearers, shrouded in their long black cloaks, were ready. The abbé led the sad procession, chanting the "De Profundis." Florence followed the coffin, unassisted, a strange power gave her strength at this moment; after the dark confinement of the sick room, the fresh air struck strangely on her senses; the lines of light in the streets, the shadows on the river, the broken outline of the various buildings,

all recalled the last evening, and she seemed to be moving in a dream, as the procession wound up the steep stairs.

The chant swelled solemnly, and the tapers flickered in the evening breeze, as death drew near its eternal mansion. The cathedral itself was only a few paces from the top of the stairs, the burial-ground some slight distance beyond the Evêché. The coffin was carried into the cathedral, and there, when placed upon trestles, the beautiful and touching service for the dead commenced. The numerous voices rose and swelled, and the solemn anthem pealed forth.

At that moment a cry was heard in the distance; and the distant sounds of drums and trumpets broke rudely on the awful ceremony. The service within the cathedral was soon concluded; the coffin was then raised again by the pall-bearers to be borne to the grave.

The night had now closed in, and the

torches which had been lighted cast a wild and lurid glow over the scene. Ever as the procession marched on, the shouts of wild joy and ribaldry grew nearer and nearer ; and then, up the narrow flights of steps which they had ascended to the Place de l'Evêché, was heard the measured tramp of soldiers. A large company of troops followed the solemn procession, and when they reached the burial-ground, took up a position round the grave, and the muskets rang on the ground.

For a few moments the ceremony was arrested by the order to load the arms. The officer then came forward, and whispered to the abbé to be as brief as possible, for there was great dread of a riot. The procession of the morning was returning from a place in the country where they had marched to, and its natural route lay by the Place de l'Evêché.

It was quite true, for even while he spoke, out of one of the narrow streets the

head of a column of men appeared, led on by those evil men who, like foul and ill-omened birds of prey, are ever found ready to batten on virtue and excellence. The mob was so dense that the leaders were pushed on to the place faster than they desired; but when there, they indulged in acts of frantic indecency and debauchery. They were half-intoxicated, and yelled like demons. Some joined hands in wild circles dancing.

“A bas les aristocrats! A bas les prêtres! Aux armes! aux armes!” they shrieked forth, amid peals of hideous laughter. This fearful life tragedy, so close to the spot where the obsequies of the dead were being performed, had an awful effect.

“If you are regretting the dead, we are regretting the living!” roared out one stentorian voice. “Give us food—give us food!”

And the torches were whirled round and

round, as the intoxicated and maddened, sacrilegious crew drew nearer and nearer.

But if at that moment the physical power of a wild and undisciplined mob wrung the hearts of many of the assistants with fear, the power and authority of an inward and sustaining faith filled others with awe. Calmly, as in a church, the religious rites continued; if anything, the abbé, instead of seeking concealment, drew himself up to be seen from afar, and thereby bore testimony to the proud truth of the faith he was preaching. And even at that moment, in a brief discourse, he took the opportunity of instancing himself as one who had adopted many visionary opinions. He then expressed a deep regret at having trusted too much to the power of the church over the minds of rude men, and to the good which he had fondly believed existed in the hearts of the worst of criminals. Alas ! he bitterly regretted, then, when it was too late, that he had ever inculcated those vain theories, which are so full

of danger, although so plausible. "What," he cried out, in self-accusing spirit "are the theories of schoolmen to the burning experience of a scene like this?"

His composure influenced the authorities, the soldiers rested on their arms, and not one turned round to watch the proceedings of the ruffians, so intent were they on the ceremony enacting before them; and as the mob kept at a distance, there was still hope that it would pass off without bloodshed, when unfortunately the ruffian Sanson (who, directly his work was over, had hurried off to join the rabble) fixed his eye on the abbé.

"Ah! there he is, my friends; there is the little abbé—there is the man who called me 'Miserable!' Come on, my friends, down with the church! The ornaments of the cathedral would feed us for a month. Come on, I say, if you have any courage!" and brandishing a hatchet over his head, the ruffian rushed forward.

The coffin had at that moment been lowered

into the grave. Florence knelt by the side. And the red glare of the torches lit up that pale and tearful countenance ; strange contrast, that look of love and patient resignation to Heaven's decrees, to the bold desperation, the ghastly look of the wretched men, who with yells and imprecations were fast approaching the burial-ground. The abbé, calm and composed as usual (oh, what a blessing is an inward faith !), knelt by the grave, and then rose and pronounced the last blessing.

“ Throw them all into the grave ! ” shouted the ruffian, and the cry was caught up by the mob beyond ; far away, to the very end of the Grande Place.

Calmly and confidently the officer in command ordered his men to face round : the arms were presented, there was one loud shriek, which followed the sharp rattle of the musketry ; there was one moment of awful suspense until the smoke cleared away, and then the pavement was seen dyed in blood. It was, however, too late ; the miscreants in

the front rank would have retreated, but they were pushed on by the mob behind, who heard the sound of the firing, but did not precisely know what had taken place. But they were soon informed, for one cry of vengeance arose, which would have disturbed the stoutest heart. A living deluge, the mob seemed to sweep onward; they clambered over the neighbouring houses, and through another gate, which opened on the opposite side of the gardens of the Evêché. Then a yell was raised, as of wounded beasts eager for their revenge and their prey; a wild discordant cry of "Le sang, Le sang!"

Florence looked up terror-stricken. She had no power to flee, and as the soldiers were borne back, would have fallen into the grave; but at that moment one of the pall-bearers, in the long mourning-cloak that had concealed his features, rushed forward. The cloak which had enveloped him was thrown around her, and, with almost herculean strength, Henri bore her through the crowd, not of foes, but

of hesitating and trembling men, men full of purpose, but, as so frequently happens, wanting moral courage. A small knot of soldiers, with one officer, still surrounded the grave, where the abbé stood, calm and collected. For a time, the crowd were kept back. At last, one of the soldiers, struck by a stone on the forehead, fell at the abbé's feet, who staggered and fell. Immediately the line of determined men was broken, and the abbé was dragged along with them. Unhappily, on reaching the Grande Place, owing to some mistake, the soldiers were separated, and the abbé, accompanied by only two men, in his ignorance of the town, turned down what he imagined to be a lane, but which was, in reality, a small court. The two men here left him to his fate, climbing up to the top of one of the houses, whence they escaped down the roof.

Then, when the mob saw that the abbé was alone and unprotected, a fearful cry, which curdled the heart's blood, was heard:

the band of assassins had found a victim. Still, there is something in the power of the mind which seems to control passions wild as the elements in their fury. As the mob pressed round the corner of the square, and saw that pale, stern, calm man, with his hands crossed over his breast, the serenity, the composure of his manner struck awe even into them. If death was so welcomed, was it so terrible a fate? was it vengeance to strike a man who bade it defiance? So did not reason, but felt the crowd. One voice was raised, and that voice broke the spell of fascination which the glance of that man had cast around. Immediately all the passions of the mob burst forth the stronger for having been for a few seconds pent up.

“Leave him to me,” said a stentorian voice. And then one man, armed with a hatchet, passed through the crowd. “Who is the Miserable now?” he exclaimed, and the answer was the dying groan of the Abbé Louis.

Another five minutes, and he might have been saved, for the roll of drums and the heavy tramp of the whole garrison was heard on all sides. "Les soldats ! les soldats !" was now the cry of the people. The tragedy had been consummated ; there was no more blood to be shed that day ; so they thought of their own safety. Up the heights the people clambered, or climbed down the parapets, and as the columns of the troops marched on, the mob vanished before them.

The arms were piled, and the soldiers bivouacked where the dead had fallen ; and soon the moonlight gleamed on the graceful towers and tracery-work of the windows, it fell on the white cloaks of the carabineers, on the glittering helmets, and the bristling arms. All around, the wayward city slept ; the rapid river rolled along, and its hoarse monotony bore no tale of sorrow to the boundless and trackless ocean, for as yet the dead had not polluted its waters. Field, forest, mountain-range, all reposed in peace ; the

sentry rested on his arms, and idly looked at the dark masses of clouds which, from time to time, were borne across the moon's path ; presently she would burst forth in lakes of light, and then the long, dark shadows of the towers of the church, pointing heavenward, were cast across the wide and open space, and its pale and silvery beams were reflected in blood.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DARKEST HOUR IS NEXT THE MORNING.

QUICK as the promptings of love and fear suggested, Henri bore the senseless form of Florence from the terrible scene. For a few minutes, he concealed himself behind one of the time-worn buttresses of the cathedral, for thence he could see all that passed—the momentary panic of the awe-struck mob, and then the deliberate butchery of the kind and good abbé. Afterwards, when the troops were steadily advancing, and the tumult was at its height, he carried her again in his arms down the steep flight of

steps which led to the hotel. He did not, however, stop there, but passed on to a place where he knew that a light carriage was stationed to await the arrival of the diligence from Paris. Without a word of explanation to the driver, he placed Florence in the carriage, and then desired the man to drive on the road to Amboise. The man hesitated until Henri placed some gold in his hand, and then, with a speed suited to the emergency, and to Henri's impatience, they started off. The crazy carriage rattled down the badly-paved street, and over the bridge. Even at that distance, the shrieks and shouts were borne down the breeze. The lights of the torches illumined with an ominous red the leaden atmosphere, while the river reflecting them in its flow, rushed forward in fiery ripples. Henri shuddered, as he contemplated the peril to which Florence had been exposed ; and he mourned the fate of that friend and guide, who had lost his life while performing a deed of Christian charity.

Florence, meanwhile, quite overcome, lay in a state of lethargy; she turned her head slightly, but only to lay it gently on his shoulder. He placed his arm round her waist, and when her soft breath fanned his cheek, he seemed to forget for the time even the horrors of that scene which they were now leaving far behind them. Arrived at the first relay, Henri engaged a person to accompany them in the carriage to Mont d'Or. For Florence, although she revived a little, was still almost inanimate, having to be carried from one carriage to another, when she could only murmur the name of her mother. Her heart was with the dead, not with the living

It was early dawn when the carriage rattled into the quiet village. It appeared most strange to Henri to contemplate the scenes which had passed in the few hours that had occurred since he left it: and what was all this to lead to? He had brought that almost insensible form back to Mont

d'Or, because he was well assured of Madame Blanchard's kindness of heart. And he was, moreover, aware that Madame Brinville had recently purchased the old manor-house. If there were any other latent reasons, he concealed them from himself, and endeavoured to believe that he had throughout acted from the most unselfish and disinterested motives ; but still, when he thought over all that had passed during the previous evening, and considered the expressions which Florence had let drop, he could not conceal from himself that there was some unaccountable obstacle to his happiness ; for her voice had the sincerity of truth, and carried conviction to his heart. At such a moment, she would never have given way to any foolish or wild fancy. No, there was some mystery which time might, but he could not, unravel.

As all these thoughts passed through his mind, the carriage sped onward, and soon stopped at the door of La Belle Etoile. To wake the household was a work of little time.

Soon the ever-kind and considerate Marie appeared at the door. Florence was lifted out, and carried gently to the same bed where she had slept so often. A sweet smile played upon her countenance, as she felt herself at home—the only home which at that moment she possessed in the wide world.

Henri said a few hurried words to Marie, and then drove on to the château. It was still early, but not too early for the old marquis, whom Henri saw walking on the terrace, as the carriage passed beneath it. Then he considered what he was to say to him of the unexpected obstacle which had been presented to him by Florence, and how his father could be induced to make a still greater sacrifice of his prejudices—and to receive Florence (if she could be induced to change her resolution) with this mystery hanging over her birth. Still she was now in the village, and near him—that was one comfort; and of all evils to those who love,

distance is the greatest. Everything can be conquered but this.

With a beating heart, and almost trembling steps, he passed through the hall that led to the terrace ; and as he stepped upon it, he imagined that he saw a figure enter his father's library, and that he made a sign to him to close the door.

The old man opened his arms, and Henri threw himself into them ; and for the moment, he thought that the love of a father cannot even be replaced by that of a woman.

“ You have heard of the sad fate of Madame Brinville ? ” asked Henri, for he saw the tears standing in the marquis's eyes.

“ Marie told me that when she left to fetch the abbé, there was no hope ; so I fear the worst. ”

“ And of the abbé himself, and Florence ? ” said Henri.

“ What—what of him ? ”

Then Henri recounted the whole of the awful scene of the previous evening; and as he proceeded, the old man clutched his stick, as he might his sword in those days when he took the field under the first marshals of France. The flush of indignation glowed in his cheek. The fire, as of youth, gleamed in his eyes; and Henri saw that had the marquis been there, one at least would have fallen in the defence of the abbé.

He dreaded the next question.

“And you stood by, my son!” said the old man.

Again the glow of anger overspread the marquis’s countenance; and his manner was harsh and severe.

Henri, with a voice somewhat indignant, somewhat irritated at the doubt implied on his courage, answered:

“Sir, I was saving Florence.”

“Thank God! thank God!” said the old man, “she is saved. But where is she? Why is she not in this castle instead of in the village? Florence, my daughter!”

“Father,” said Henri, with a deep and impressive voice, “I must tell you the truth. What the cause may be, I know not—for it is quite certain that she loves me, indeed, she told me so—but some strange idea, some madness has seized upon her ; there is a mystery which time alone can explain. I met her on the terrace after her mother’s death, and at that solemn moment she told me that she was unworthy of me. It was no idle notion, believe me. I feel convinced that the moment she is able to travel she will leave this place immediately.”

“I hope not ! I hope not !” replied the marquis. “We must find some influence to prevent her. M. de Gouvion.”

When the marquis spoke the door of the library opened, and M. de Gouvion appeared. Henri was correct in his supposition that a stranger had entered the room, when he stepped upon the terrace.

“M. de Gouvion,” said the marquis, “I am happy to introduce to you a young

gentleman as interested as yourself in the prospects of Mademoiselle Langeac."

"Mademoiselle Langeac!" exclaimed Henri, "who is she? I saw in the papers that M. Langeac had been outrageously killed by the mob the other day; but what has that to do with Florence—I mean with Mademoiselle Brinville?"

"Florence. You spoke it rightly," said M. de Gouvion. "It is a beautiful name, and from all I can learn, the young lady is in every respect worthy of it; but I have much to tell you that will interest you, and which in time you may communicate to the young lady whose welfare is, it seems, united to yours."

M. de Gouvion then gave a full account of M. Langeac's circumstantial statement to him; how Madame Brinville had been betrayed by him; of her life of misery, excellence, and good works; of M. Langeac's repentance, of Estelle's death, and the vast change which this made in Florence's position, and he ended by

placing in Henri's hands those papers deposited with him just before the attack on the Rue St. Dominique, by which M. Langeac made over to Florence, as his daughter, the colossal fortune which he had amassed during his successful career; and justified Madame Brinville's conduct by showing how grossly she had been deceived, and how nobly she had acted throughout her sad, mournful, and brief career.

Henri's eyes glistened with delight; already the vista of years full of golden promise burst upon him. He took M. Gouvion's hand and pressed it warmly.

"Henri," said the marquis, "there is one circumstance in this history of which M. de Gouvion is ignorant, and which I must mention, in order to render it complete. You will remember my mentioning to you on one occasion when I was warning you against the practices by which young men are too apt to dissipate their fortunes, and to stake in a few hours the noble possessions of an

honoured race ; that I related to you how all this property, which we now enjoy, was on one occasion almost wrecked by your grandfather. An enormous sum of money had been lost at play ; and this old castle was to have been sold to pay off the debt, when an old college friend—a noble, honourable character — rescued our name from oblivion. It was the father of the late M. Langeac.”

“ Nor is this all,” said the marquis, after a pause, “ it so unhappily happened that in the act of rescuing his friend from ruin, he completed his own. He had relied on the successful result of a speculation, in which he had embarked, to meet certain imperative engagements. The speculation, contrary to all prognostications, failed, and M. Langeac died of a broken heart, leaving his son, the father of Florence.”

“ And if she will now consent to be mine, you will welcome her, my father ?”

“ Yes, if she will consent, she shall be

welcome as you are, my son. And now," said the marquis, "let M. de Gouvion go to La Belle Etoile, and present to Mademoiselle Florence all the papers, which explain the past, and give hope to the future."

It was evening when the marquis and Henri strolled down to La Belle Etoile. What a change between that evening and the former one. The light to-night was not of lurid torches, but of peaceful sunset; the red streaks of the heavens were the promise of a glorious morn, not the reflection of the innocent blood which crime had shed. There are some spots like some hearts, always at rest, always at peace, to approach which is happiness, or to dwell amongst which is the sweetest solace to dull and cankered cares. Florence had risen, and after having seen M. de Gouvion, had gone to visit the chapel.

"I will wait for you," said the marquis to Henri. Gently Henri trod, that his footsteps should not disturb her; and so tranquil

was nature, that he could hear the faint murmurs of the tiny ripples as they sparkled and tumbled over the pebbles in the brook. She was not without the chapel; was it intruding upon her seclusion to look within? There she was kneeling, and over her that pale lamp shed its light; and the waves of golden hair which fell around her, while they concealed her features, prevented her noticing Henri's approach. At that moment there was unity between them, the unity of prayer, the unity of regrets, the unity of love; and what should part them therefore?

"Florence, my own Florence!" he murmured, in a whisper so soft, that it seemed but a part of that blessing which she was at the moment invoking for him. He took her hand; there were no promises, no vows, no explanations, but the wanderer had found a home, the lonely one a spot on which her heart could repose; and as they both stood in Heaven's gaze, with heart plighted to

heart, the last sweet tints of twilight were reflected in the fond and grateful tears of Florence the Beautiful.

Time passed on; the genius of evil hovered over France; onward swept the Revolution; confiscation followed confiscation; heaven's light was obscured, and the darkness comprehended it not, that gloom and darkness fell alike on the humble cottage and the proud château; corruption blasted the one, and plunder destroyed the other. Nor was La Tour Beauport spared; although the marquis was so beloved by all classes in that neighbourhood that neither he nor his family were exposed to any risk, still he was compelled to retire to that small cottage which belonged to his daughter, the scene of the early affections of those whom he most loved; and there, in seclusion and

peace, they waited for fairer and happier times.

And there was one ever welcome to that cottage; not alone for the love which they all bore her, but for that gentle and graceful spirit of hope which she shed around wherever she moved. The mission which Marie shared in life with a few other kind and devoted hearts was not arrested, when the church was uprooted, and faith decayed; and the loving *Sœur de Charité* justified in her looks the happiness of a life of constant charity and self-denial.

And often at evening, where no echoes of the world's turmoil disturbed the hearts thus by love united—when the shades of night were gathering round them, and the dark turrets of the proud ancestral *château* blended with the purple distance—at that hour when young affections draw closer to the heart to nestle there—these two, so happy in each other, would speak of the past with grateful and fond remembrance. And often they

wandered to the spot where they met in earlier days, when anxiety and doubt mingled with the whispers of love, and they first sat by the fountain.

THE END.

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